MARTIN SCHULER

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MARTIN SCHÜLER

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BY

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HEIDELBERG

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HEIDELBERG

CHAPTER I

THERE were in old times, before Europe was divided amongst the children of Asia, nine peahens. These peahens were in reality nine spellbound damsels of surpassing loveliness. Eight of them were fit brides for the princes of the earth, but the ninth was far lovelier than any queen or princess man has ever imagined. The ninth peahen, who was a queen in her own right, fell in love nevertheless with an ordinary prince, the youngest son of a king—antiquaries suspect that this prince was Joseph, son of Jacob—and therefore she came every evening to perch in the branches of a golden apple-tree that grew in the garden of his father's palace. This tree blossomed, bore fruit, and yielded it all in the same night. The peahen, by perseverance, decoyed the young prince into the garden and, after revealing to him her true nature, disappeared. After many adventures and in spite of the powers of evil, the prince recovered her and they were married. They had several children who became kings and princes.

1

Martin Schüler read this tale carefully in a more elaborate edition than the above, namely, in the pleasant translation made from the Serbian by Madame Elodie Mejatovitch. He was searching for some tale upon which to erect an opera, and there lay around him English, French, and German books of fairy-lore, ancient legends and ghost stories. Martin Schüler was very ambitious and very young. At twenty years old he was a hot Wagnerite and hoped, if possible, to create a counter-type of Tristan and Isolde and one or two Gotterdämmerungs; his heart was full of the passionate fire that results in magnificent if somewhat commonplace noise; his mind yearned to stretch itself in wide orchestration; the nerves of his ears strained to balance themselves upon flute-arias played perfectly, even a little too perfectly, in tune. His musical temperature was a little too sharp, whereas that of most people is decidedly too flat, as we say. He was mad for perfection, he was without experience, he was swamped by the master-writer of Europe, he was insane for precocity. He determined that at twenty-three he would shake the world. In his immense hurry he bought several books of fable and mythology because operatic music seems a misfit on the back of truth. Having decided at all costs to be original he read three or four books on Slav legendary, but the only one he could comprehend or fasten down to any Teutonic idea of an opera was that which contained the story of the nine peahens. Being in a hurry, as soon as he

discovered anything at all suitable he stopped searching and began to dream with the book in his hand.

Martin Schüler lived in Heidelberg with his parents, who gave him an attic with a piano in it where he could be both noisy and untidy. The late afternoon sun came in from the west and filled the attic with brown light. It had a dormer window and a sloping ceiling, and what upright wall there was was papered with a shiny yellow wall-paper of an acanthus leaf design that at the time of the accession of the third Frederick had been new and mustard-coloured. It was now mellowed with years and mildewed with damp, and ought long ago to have suffered the fate of its larger portion that lay obscured beneath a newer design in the sitting-room downstairs. This wall-paper shone in the sunshine like a halo about Martin and his piano, and his table and chairs and books and ink-pots and music paper. He sat with his feet on the table, and in the middle of his dreams began to think of his sister, who wore a blouse cut square at the neck and played the piano beautifully. He had his theories of inspiration like everybody else, and one of these was that music inspired music, so he used to get his sister to play to him. As a matter of fact, the music he heard suggested similar music, and in many of his earlier efforts Chopin and the others would have recognized variations of airs that had been discarded by them for better variations. Youth is a period of disappointment.

Young men find when they first begin serious work that there is nothing new under the sun and that it is impossible not to create platitudes.

Soon Martin began to want his sister to play for him, and remained in this condition for about ten minutes before he got up enough energy to rouse himself to call her. Presently, throwing the book aside, he got out of his comfortable position and went to the door, calling in a guttural voice, "Bertah! Bertah! Come up here!"

Bertha, who was mending socks in the sitting-room, called out, "I am coming," and after carefully rolling up the grey pair which she was darning in such a way that the darn did not show, she went upstairs singing,

"The wife indeed to her good-man."

Like her brother she had smooth fawn skin, soft dark eyes with scarcely any iris, abundant, rather coarse dark hair, a marked chin with a cleft in it, a firm Teutonic mouth and a round head, rather forced forward above the brows. Martin Schüler's eyes were a little deeper set, his mouth was more mobile; besides, he had a shock of unkempt hair, whereas his sister's tresses were glossy with much brushing and lay round her head in smooth shining plaits.

"Come play," said Martin, as his sister's plaits appeared above the stairs. Then her body emerged in its cotton house-frock, and he went to the piano and kicked two chairs into position. Bertha never

refused to play. She sat down immediately and set off into a cascade of Chopin. Martin sat by her like a music-master and said, " Piano ! " " Allegro ! " " Forte ! " and occasionally tapped high C to emphasize his murmurs, but she took no notice of him.

In the middle of a Schumann intermezzo he put his big hands on hers and stopped her sentimentally.

" Sweetest sister," he said, " I wish I could play as you do." Bertha smiled with delight. Her brother was the apple of her eye.

" Martische," she said, " you would if you had not been such a bad little boy."

" Never," he said.

He did play very badly. Bertha had invented the fable that the fairies had stiffened his finger tendons because he was once so naughty as to disbelieve in them. She liked teasing him about it. She liked being able in one thing to excel him, to excel everybody in the house. When she played the piano everybody in the house looked up to her and she liked it. She played so well that all her friends thought she was exceedingly virtuous and clever, and Martin played so badly that all her friends thought him good for nothing and stupid. Her father shared this idea, and was for ever goading at him and accusing him of cow-like dullness, but he indulged him to a certain extent because the military authorities let him off service and he was considered delicate. He was not in

the least delicate, but, like many young people, he had shown slight symptoms of heart weakness at the age of examination.

Martin kept his hands over Bertha's for a moment or two, and went on talking. " I have had to-day a glorious inspiration," he said. He let the announcement sink in, and seeing a sympathetic look of expectancy in her eyes, leant over the back of his chair and twitched Madame Mejatovitch's book off the table into his hands.

He read her the story of the peahens.

" That won't make an opera," she said.

He was disappointed. He thought her slightly cruel, as a small boy thinks his brother is cruel when the brother assures him that the rock he is standing on is not a mountain.

" What shall I do ? " he said. Though neither of them knew it, her opinion was his criterion of judgment. In those days his critical faculty did not extend to his own productions ; he depended upon his untrained instinct, and it depended upon the opinion of those around him, and, because Bertha was obviously sane, chiefly upon Bertha. An instinct before it is sure clings to sanity. Thus young instincts often regulate themselves by the works of acknowledged masters.

" What shall I do ? " repeated Martin sadly.

" You must mix it with something more solid," she said ; " allegorical, I think, or human. You will never rise to deep passions on that." She too admired Wagner.

Martin put up a defence. "You are right, Bertah," he said, "but I could make something very beautiful and lovely out of it."

"You will never get the desired deep passion out of fairy stories."

"I could make the prince have a human sweetheart also." He opened the book and made the pages run like a little cascade between his finger and thumb. "Or could I not imagine passion into the princess?"

"It would be very difficult," said Bertha; "an opera ought to touch some vital string of the heart to vibrate in us very deeply. Now I must go and mend your all-too-many socks."

She rose, but Martin took hold of the skirt of her cotton dress. "Stay," he said, "play again. You have caused a downfall in me; it is only right you should help me to rise. Play to me while I look out of the window at the evening which will presently creep over Heidelberg. Perhaps I shall recover myself and have a heavenly thought."

Bertha teased him. "Your socks have real holes that must be filled in. Your dreams are castles in the air; no one will live in them so they need never be built."

"I have heard Mama talk like that," he said; "it is very silly. No one can estimate the value of a beautiful opera; socks cost at most three or four marks."

"Don't begin to be philosophical," said Bertha; "I know all about that. I can tell you everything

you are about to say, including even starvation is a beautiful and noble death if it produce a wonderful work of art.'" Nevertheless, she was obedient by nature, and before any more was said upon this controversial subject she began to play. She began with a tinkling melody of old Rubinstein's, which is certainly worth less than a pair of socks; then she played a comic song which Martin, who had begun to think, thought was worth writing because of the disproportionate riches it brought to the composer. For a minute he was guilty of wishing to write a comic song, but he purged himself quickly of the desire. She played a waltz—not a dance waltz, a concert waltz—and Martin felt an appropriate and lively pleasure creep up to his head where it turned into the obvious question, was such a production worth all the strain and labour and bad temper that had brought it to perfection. He began to be moral and to balance relative worth until she annihilated his feelings with a passionate grand opera, and left him cold and chill upon an early work of Claude Debussy. He got up and shouted, "Not that! Not that inventor of seductive titles." She played on, however, as she chose until she fell into the most stirring music.

Meanwhile Martin had gone to the window and looked out over the river. The house of the Schülers was up one of the steep streets of the town below the castle. It was high enough up to see a long way from the attic window. Martin stood in the

window quite alone because the sloping roof and the walls made it into a little box where one could isolate oneself even if the room were full of people. He gazed out over the river towards the north-west, where the sun had already sunk from view. The window faced west, but the side panes looked north and south; thus he could see if he chose the overmantling darkness of the castle, the whole town, the new western part of the town, the broad river gliding away to the west to fold itself into the Rhine, the broad Rhine plain beyond stretching west and north-west, and, close in again, due north, just across the river, the vine hills with the ruined tower and the philosopher's way creeping down to the pretty suburb of Neunheim, where the richer people built their houses. The Elector's Bridge was just out of sight beyond the roof. Directly below him the old town lay in a tumbled heap. It seemed that if one house fell or moved the whole lot would rattle like bricks into the river. Splash! what a splash if the whole town fell into the river!

"The whole town has fallen into the river! The whole town has fallen into the river!" somebody seemed to sing in clear, tragic notes. Martin's gaze was fixed on the far horizon, and his imagination seemed to see, as if at the end of a very long telescope that reduced objects to microscopic dimensions, a little highly-coloured facsimile of the old town falling into a little river. What a downfall! How the people cried like a thousand

souls in a sinking ship, " God, have mercy upon us ! " The houses toppled forward and crashed into the river, crushing in the bridges. " The bridges have been crushed in : the town has fallen into the river." The people wailed; the noise of their lamentations rose from the falling ruins like flames from a fire. " How shall we cross ? The bridges are crushed in. Our dear ones are drowned. Let us climb up to the castle. That too falls. Our dear ones are drowned in the river. Lord, have mercy upon us ! It is the end of the world—down on your knees—it is the end of the world. Say the Litany." What an end for an opera with the deep, sonorous music of the Litany ! Martin's thoughts culminated in this thought. His spirits had revived. He cried out joyously to his sister : " Little sister, play no more," and pushing her off the chair played out the music he had heard.

" The whole town has fallen into the river ! " He thumped, and strummed a good deal more besides, including a *motif* for the Litany.

" That is better," said his sister ; " but you must begin."

" I shall begin with the peahens," he said, " they shall entrance the princes of the town ; all the people will go to the bad because of them, and then God with one kick of His foot will send all the town rolling into the river." Martin smiled and almost licked his lips at the magnificent thought of the Deity propelling Heidelberg into the Neckar with His foot.

Bertha was practical. "Who will write the poem, brother?" she said.

Martin was a little irritated to discover that she never imagined he would do the whole thing alone, but he answered, "Werner and I together. I'll sketch it out and run to Werner at once. He will see eye to eye with me."

"How ill poor Werner looks," said Bertha. "I'd like to buy him a good dinner every day till he gets fat."

"He's diseased. He'll never get fat—besides, he never has an appetite."

"I expect he's trained himself to starve because it is more convenient," said Bertha, getting up from her chair. "Poor Werner! Mother and I were grieved last time you brought him to supper. We pressed sausage and chicken and soup and cakes upon him, and father urged him to take beer, but he only drank a little wine and sat there amusing us all with his clever remarks, and eating nothing, like an unbidden guest. Mother likes Werner, and so do I. He looks old, doesn't he? I should say he was thirty-six or seven. I wonder why he doesn't make any money with his clever brains."

"He's a little bit queer," said Martin. "He needs a publisher, you know; he lets his works lie in a drawer and forgets them directly they are finished, and if I or any of his friends urge him to publish something, he says, 'Yes, perhaps,' and puts it back into the drawer and forgets it again. I don't believe he's so old as you think. He can't

be more than twenty-seven, because he passed his examinations when I was thirteen or so."

"He looks so clever," said Bertha again; "he reminds me a little bit of Dante."

"Oh, come," said Martin, lighting his lamp, "he is not at all like Dante. He hasn't Dante's nobility of feature, nor his nose; that's because he is so thin. Don't compare moles to mice because they are small and have fur."

"I must go," said Bertha. "I hope Werner will agree to do it."

"There's no doubt," said Martin, who, nevertheless, had a slight qualm of doubt. "He's very obliging."

Bertha went to the door. "Good luck," she said as she opened it and went out. She stuck her head in again to ask if he were going that night.

"Immediately," said Martin; "I shan't sleep unless I do."

Bertha went down the dark stairs to the kitchen, where her mother was making herb soup for supper, and set about to prepare a ragout of mutton and chickens' legs. She cut up a terrible lot of onions, until the tears ran out of her eyes and the pungent odour of bruised onions rose through the house to the attic where Martin sat. The Schülers owned the top part of the house; the two lower floors belonged to somebody else. As Bertha cut onions she thought of Martin and his opera and his aspirations. It seemed very unlikely a Wagner would emanate from their house, but what of that?

Musicians had to be born and brought up somewhere. She removed the coarse skin from another onion. It seemed to her that an immense time must elapse before Martin completed an opera, and that a gulf must be crossed before he became famous. He must surely lose his boyhood, change the aspect of his countenance, vanish, and return a stranger related to nobody, before he could take a place amongst that group of creatures called rich and famous men. She bent to the onion basket for yet another onion, and something pricked her breast. She knew what it was: it was the corner of her lover's last letter. Her lover's name was Hermann Markheim, and he was surely the most wonderful young man on earth. He had a small government position, and Bertha had secured his affections by giving him sweet glances and "thank yous" every time he turned over her music for her at soirées. She moved herself inside her clothes until the letter was comfortable without putting down the onion or the onion knife, but her thoughts turned to marriage and dowries, bed-linen and the slow progress of time. All Bertha's family were very fond of her and valued her. She accepted their valuation, though it was too low. Nobody but Markheim ever saw her true worth, and he forgot that two years after their marriage, but she was happy and uninjured because she always saw herself as others saw her, and not as she was.

CHAPTER II

MARTIN made a rough draft of the opera, with the words and tune that came to him at the window fully inserted. He was anxious, agitated, and delighted; his heart leapt continually in long beats, his eyes strained, his fingers hastened, his hands shook. He wanted to capture his memories; he wanted to complete his idea; he knew that if he completed the idea the opera would follow in due time. He put down all he could—the destruction of the city, the counter-*motif* of constructive love:

"Ah, beautiful love why adornest thou only the apple-tree?"

He emptied his mind; he drained his imagination; he exhausted the forces that he had acquired from the sunset and his sister's piano-playing; but instead of falling into despair when he could think no more, he rose up happy because he was satisfied in his emptiness that he had taken out something vital, something which to-morrow or the next day would be added to, something which would act upon his mind and stimulate in him ideas, desires, and thoughts, and so force itself to its own completion.

Martin got his soft hat off the floor and paused before he put it on his head to gaze again at the perfection of the peahens. He seemed to hear actors and actresses singing the beautiful unwritten tunes. He saw himself applauded as he took a curtain on the first night. All the usual dreams of future fame came into his head. He put on his hat, took up the manuscript and read portions of it again as he stood by the lamp. He smiled because it was so good. He held it very close to the lamp, and the light on the white paper dazzled his eyes so that when he looked up he saw green and yellow blurs. He put the manuscript into his coat and walked downstairs as young men do—clamp, clamp, straight on his heels. The yellow and green blurs swam before him down to the street door, where they were dispelled by the light from the street lamp just above it. He lit his pipe and sauntered round to see Werner.

The street in which Werner lived was dark and the houses were old and shabby. Sentimental Britons would have considered it vandalism to rebuild them because they were ancient and picturesque, though millions of generations of house-fleas and worse pests had seen the light there, and mice abounded. It was unlikely they would be rebuilt for many years, for the rich people of the town were moving to the west end, and the landlords had a sufficient stream of low-class lodgers to make optimistic hopes of long leases still worth holding. Landlords will allow bad and worthless houses to stand

for ever all on the chance that some day some one will offer a fabulous rent for an unending term of years. "I am sure to get an offer next year," they say; "I'll let it stand a year longer." "This is no time for building. House property is the devil"; and thus old houses get older, and poor districts get poverty-stricken, until some enterprising man with pyramids of red-brick at his command commits those abhorred acts of vandalism which ruin the town, destroy the taste and individuality of the working man, provide good and clean homes and ensure, as far as a mere bricklayer can ensure, the health of a future generation. When the red brick begins to mellow and the roof to leak, the landlord comes into his own again—those pleasant years of procrastination—and one can annoy him by quoting apt proverbs all containing the word "time."

Martin got to the door of the house where Werner dwelt. A carved face with an evil leer grinned from over the lintel. The door itself was sparsely decorated with ancient and inferior patterns and the door latch was an example in wrought-iron of the bad taste that was considered good taste in Heidelberg two or three hundred years ago. Martin pushed open the door and entered the house. He shut it behind him and found himself in total darkness. Werner provided no lamp for chance visitors, nor did the other tenants, because there were no other tenants. He lived alone there, and he only rented one room at the top. Martin stumbled

up the bare wooden stairs, cursing softly. By the time he reached Werner's door his hands were begrimed with feeling along walls coated with damp dust, and he was out of breath with the long struggle upwards and the fear of hitting his head against some beam or corner. He knocked on Werner's door with his knuckles, and as the door seemed cleaner than the walls he rubbed off what dirt he could on it. A voice growled for him to enter. He went in. The feeble light of two candles almost dazzled him. He blinked, and stretched out grimy paws to Werner, who actually got up to welcome him, but refused his outstretched hands. Werner was quite fond of Schüler, and thought that perhaps he might make a name for himself some day. He never said so or accorded him any familiarity on that ground; but he was quite fond of Schüler and thought better of him than he did of most people, and Schüler thought well of him. He made Schüler sit down, adjusted the candles so that he could see his face, and then sat down himself in a chair that nobody had ever known him to yield to anybody. He wore a ragged red cotton dressing-gown bordered with a bad Paisley design, a pair of check trousers made in France in the year 1890, and an unclean cotton shirt. These clothes had been his father's, and for eight years, since that gentleman's decease, their inheritor had worn them as a boudoir suit to save his cloth clothes. Werner was twenty-eight years old; he was ugly and diseased. Bertha's

remark that he was like Dante probably meant he was thin and foreign looking; his nationality was not to be guessed from his face, for when his beard was long he resembled a cadaverous Frenchman, and in those periods when, as at present, he was clean shaven, he resembled only himself, or, as one of his friends said, all the thin men in the world.

Some beer was produced, and Martin began to open out his opera. Werner pretended to be bored, and Martin prevented himself from becoming chilled with the greatest difficulty. When the panegyric was over, Werner muttered "Wagneresque" between his teeth. In Werner's company Martin felt a little ashamed of admiring Wagner, so he said, "No, not the idea: it is heartfelt." Werner still appeared to be bored, and showed no signs of longing to write the poem about which Martin had hinted very broadly, for now he was in the Presence, and the Presence was so unsympathetic Martin found it impossible to say outright, "Look, my friend, here is your chance for fame. Compose the verse for my future opera!"

Werner sat and looked at Martin, and Martin sat and blinked at Werner, and decided that he must take him out and give him some more beer, so he invited him to rouse, change his clothes, and come and have supper with him up by the castle. Werner acceded, and shortly got up and put on respectable garments, drew water from a tap outside his door, and threatened to go to hell

before he'd go out with such a dirty-pawed dog as Martin. Martin washed gladly, and said he too would go to hell before he'd negotiate Werner's stairs again without a light. Thus they became quite moderately gay and jolly—Martin in spite of the burden of immediate fame, and Werner in spite of his poor and miserable circumstances.

There was no moon that night, and the stars were brilliant. Martin commented on this as they walked up the exceedingly steep hill to the castle.

"It is always so without a moon," he said. "The moon makes the stars pale, does it not? And puts some of them out. I like these cloudless dark nights. Look at the Great Bear I only know her and the Plough by sight."

"That is the Belt," said Werner, as Martin called it the Plough; "and over there are the twins, Gemini, Lovely Children. I believe so, at least, but I am not an astronomer."

"Sometimes I wish," continued Martin, "that the stars were all planets, and sometimes that they were all fixed."

"I dream of collisions in space when Martin Schüler says let all the stars be planets!" Werner actually began to laugh.

As they ascended the hill the last red light of sunset was fading into purple in the west.

"The sun takes so long to go these summer nights," said Martin.

"Spring," said Werner. "May surely is spring;

call it spring. Why do you hurry the year over so quickly?"

"Summer begins for me," said Martin, "when the trees are green."

"And for me when the heat stenches. The smell of the heat in the street is horrible."

"I generally take a walking expedition with a few friends," said Martin. "Dark forests, the Schwarzwald, and the little lakes up there are cool and full of dreams and also of amusements for swimmers and fishers and stone-throwers. We take rucksacks and sleep under the trees. On some days the girls come by train and we have fun."

"Fun with girls," said Werner; "that sounds nice. You like girls, of course. You are young, and have desires. Which is it you like best—the girls or the desires?"

Martin laughed. "Oh, the girls; quite frankly, the girls," he said. "We have great fun, of course—games—and they scream and we are all jolly."

"You all like showing off your arms and legs and your wits, and your naughty stories, and immediately you see a sign of the moon you become sentimental and pair off each one with the girl who has chosen him, and kiss perhaps."

"Perhaps," said Martin. "It's fun, I can tell you." He blushed, because he remembered the first experiences of love, and they were not very far away; they had hardly receded behind the veil of shame to that far place where they arouse no feeling.

They were nearing the Restoration-place up by the Castle, and could see each other by the glow of its many little lights, which shone out, making a multicoloured blaze.

" Red, white, and blue is an ugly combination of colours," said Martin, who seemed bound to make ordinary conversation.

"Yes," said Werner, "especially when the light inside is yellow. Why, can you tell me, do places of public entertainment always oppress themselves with jewels like a Dowager Grand Duchess ? " He said this mincingly.

Martin laughed. " I am boring you with silly conversation," he said. " I am very hot and excited inside. Here, I've given myself away. You would take the meat out of a live crab, Werner."

" There are worse occupations," said Werner, meaningly.

" I don't see the point," said Martin, but Werner forced it in with his eyes, and Martin blushed and almost said aloud, " Better, you mean, than taking poetry out of live poets," but he covered his thoughts with an exclamation about their proximity to the restaurant. They talked no more, and Martin ordered a table quite close to the parapet, whence the best view can be had. This especial supper-place was not his haphazard choice He chose it because of its height above the city, and because one could watch the winding of the river ; in a word, because of its noble surroundings,

for he was aware that in noble surroundings a man often hears better.

Presently they were seated face to face at a white table, and Martin ordered sausage and ham, sauerkraut, and beer for two, and then, in the last faint glow of the May twilight, set himself the task of warming Werner up.

The beautiful night had stolen over the town, and far below on the black river lights sparkled. Lights shone in the houses and at the theatre and in the streets, a universe of stars fallen to earth. It was easy to pick out the constellations of the Bahnhof, of the market-place, and of the principal wharves. Martin felt like a dweller in Uranus, remote and yet a companion of the planets, as he sat with Werner in the multicoloured star of the Restoration-place. He said so to Werner, who said he was far-fetched and rather taken up with the stars that evening. Martin ignored him and pointed out the theatre, and what he imagined was the fencing schools, and what he thought were the streets in which he and Werner lived respectively, and finally made a general remark about the equality of all places after dark when they were lit by municipal gas, which was the same for all. Werner told him that if his opera was as unoriginal as his remarks it would be practically worthless. Werner was in a tedious mood. The minor poets often assume, and sometimes suffer, tedious moods; they are a part of the divine uneasiness that afflicts genius. One is tempted to believe that great

poets are always in a state of uneasiness and unrest, always unhappy, unbearable, and morose, always topheavy, with no sense of balance, with eyes straining into heaven unmindful of the lesser things of life. Great poets should be selfish and exacting, should have strange habits and wear strange clothes, should have an excess of one virtue or one vice, should thrill the lucky individuals who hear them on those rare occasions when they speak. They have no familiar friends and no relations; nobody calls them "Dick," or "Toto," or "Willie"; they address nobody as "old boy," "old girl," or "kiddy." As all poets are the same to the crowd, all poets are great poets, more or less readable, more or less comprehensible. Some people are so clever that they read Goethe and Browning and Dante—at least so people say. One has to be clever to understand the incomprehensibles. Anybody can understand Shakespeare: they teach it in all the schools; they teach Goethe too, but only clever people care for him and keep up with him afterwards. Nobody ever met a poet in the flesh. There are not grades of poets, but those we understand we like, and as time goes on and we like the more difficult and at last the most difficult, those left behind fall from grace and become bad poets, poor poets, minor poets. Such things do not really exist: they are creatures of the minds of clever men—men who only understand higher mathematics, invent morse-codes, read Arabic, and know exactly without the aid of a dictionary

what the Bible means in the original, and what German expressions Homer intended when he wrote Greek.

Looked at from the point of view of clever men, Werner was a minor poet. He had to work uncommonly hard to produce anything worth reading. He had an acute sense of rhythm, and would sweat for hours to produce lines to satisfy his sensitive nerves. Sometimes he had remarkable successes, which few people appreciated because passion and ideas are chiefly sought for in poetry. His efforts mostly resulted in a *tour de force*, but after exerting his intellect like a mathematician for several hours to complete some ode, he would suddenly sigh, relax, and scribble in half-consciousness a really good lyric. He wrote twelve lyrics worth reading, but these were the fruit of immense toil, though they dropped off the branches of his labour like ripe peaches, for they only came into being after long hours of conscious work upon something entirely different. His works after his death were admired by philologists, musicians of the better class, who got a good many rhythmic ideas out of him, and schoolmasters, who found him pure enough to read to their pupils as an example of modern poetry. His lyrics appeared in anthologies, and thus misquotations of them spread to tombstones, Christmas greeting cards, and birthday books, for they had the misfortune to be clear and easy to understand if one did not care to see what they really meant. While he was alive

he never published anything, partly because he was too busy and partly because he was too idle to struggle with publishers; thus he remained poor and unknown till he died. He was also a snob, because he enjoyed privately all the posthumous appreciation that his creditors got.

Werner drank out of a mug adorned with the arms of Bavaria, and looked at Martin through the angle formed by the lid and the top of the mug. His grey eyes were summing up Martin Schüler; he was in a contrary mood and prepared to resist Martin's enthusiasm, but he was a little flattered because a young man desired to associate him with a dreamed-of masterpiece. He continued to assume boredom and to drink measured drinks out of his mug and to say very little. He watched Martin finish his sauerkraut and sausage; he watched him open his mouth to insert the beer mug; he watched him put the empty beer mug down and turn on his seat away from the table; he watched him adopt towards the night the attitude of a night-enchanted young man, and then pause and dream a little before he spoke.

"On such a night," said Martin at length, sweeping his arms wide to indicate it, "the beautiful peahen first disclosed herself to the amazed prince. He lay on his couch beneath the golden apple-tree, and, lo! in the branches appeared a shining light. 'O whence dost thou, thou bright illumination,' shall be the note for the prince. 'O whence dost thou, thou bright illumination.'

Do you hear the movement? It came into my mind just this moment as the moon came over yonder hill. The peahen was as beautiful as the moon. I feel the enchantment; I feel the movement. Don't you feel it also?"

"Not very clearly," said Werner, in a voice of clay; but, nevertheless, the extreme beauty of the night over the river and the silence of the May moon and the darkness of the vine-clad hill that had just slid from before her face and the youth of Martin and the age of Heidelberg were beginning to enter his mind and steal away his cynicism. For all that he remained ungracious in manner; he was not the one to give himself away when he felt a little romantic.

Martin shifted his chair round the table till he faced the moon and could at the same time rest his arms on the table. The moon stood opaque and unluminous in the deep purple of the lower heavens, round, orange, and immense, seen through the smell of new leaves and May flowers that rose in mist from the hills. The hills stretched like a bow in the darkness along the river as it flowed under them from the east. The heavy moon cast no shadows upon them and sent no shafts of light between their trees. Heavy and silent she stood, while the horizon sank slowly beneath her, sank as slowly as time. Slowly the veils fell from her—the veil of mist, the veil of heat, the veil of the work of the day that floats up from the world at sunset and is dispelled by the night breezes. Slowly

she became bright, swift, and cold: a light giver, a shadow maker, diminished in size, the naked spirit of the red veiled disc. The two men at the little glittering restaurant watched her slow transformation, and one saw in his mind a lovely garden with green grass and jewelled flowers, and in the garden a golden tree, and in the tree a moon shining upon a bewildered prince clothed in mediæval clothing; the other saw nothing but what was before his eyes. He became aware of it and lost himself in it and went away from his body across the river, and for one short instant held the moon in his hands. He fell to earth in a distant place where the moon shone white upon white mountains in an indigo sky, he stood one instant in the antithesis of gold and purple, and returned in the wink of an eye to gaze from where he sat with brooding memory upon the wide expanse that seemed large enough to be the world, and the ascending moon that now seemed distant as the remotest star.

Martin continued to talk, and Werner awoke from his moon-memories to the sound of a well-fed young man's voice. Dreams were rare with him, and he felt peevish with the voice for dispelling them.

"The princess descends from the tree, and then of course there is a love scene," said Martin.

"That is very banal," said Werner, but all the same, directly he became aware of what Martin's words meant, he received an idea for a love song,

or, rather, saw an opportunity for introducing an idea that had long vaguely haunted his mind.

"If you prefer," said Martin, who felt suddenly angry, "there shall be a quarrel with swears and curses."

"No," said Werner; "don't be stupid. It is a very nice idea. The descent from the tree, and love to follow, quite after the classical example. I'll do my best for you, but Christ Himself knows all love scenes are dull."

"I'll ask Monk," growled Martin; "he'll do it."

"No, no," said Werner, "don't do that."

Martin remembered he was only twenty, and saw in Werner's attitude some sort of patronage, which did not really exist. He felt resentful.

"You are a superior animal"—he muttered "superior."

"Oh, no!" said Werner; "I want to write this poem for you." Martin had made his point without actually making a demand, but he did not feel victorious. Werner went on: "It is not a bad idea; might be quite pretty, though I see you are going to make common pitfalls. I'll sweat them out of the poetic part even though you are too young to sweat them out of the music, and my efforts will probably be wasted. You ought to drop the whole thing like a penny, and pick it up tail first to get a new point of view, or you ought to walk all round it till it looks absurd and then begin. The apple-tree is a charming notion. I wish youth and experience could be given to us at once. I am

in such a high state of technical perfection that I cannot write a really bad piece of verse without an effort, and yet, my dear boy—lassitude"—he paused and looked Martin in the face—"I am so bored that I feel convinced my first youth is over."

Martin became sympathetic.

"You're only young, Werner," he said, "only young yet."

"Yes, but I came into existence long before my mother sent me forth into the world. What happens to the prince after embracing his peahen?"

"They lead the city to destruction, and there is a final calamity through the interference of God."

"A tragedy. Very dreadful."

"An idea runs through it of the relationship of love to facts." Martin invented ideas as he spoke. "Love, though beautiful, begets disaster. Disaster is the beautiful and right climax of love. Nothing great can be anything but disastrous."

"Sad truths," said Werner. "Go on."

"Always, always, love brings disaster. Great things and noble things are incautious and reckless, so they make omissions, and do acts that turn to their destruction, or they disregard some principle. Don't you think so? Jealousy and unhappiness always exist ready to destroy great things. Werner, you and I can make something out of this. Werner, Werner! My youth and your experience! And what words when the city crashes into the river, and what praises of love!"

Werner could not help an habitual lifting of the lip. "What unrestraint," he murmured, "and what banging on the drum and squeezing of air through bassoons!"

"Go to hell!" said Martin.

"Give me your notes then," said Werner, "and some more beer. Perhaps another mug will send me slobbering into Paradise."

CHAPTER III

WERNER returned home with the manuscript to his house, where the mice made merry with cheese crumbs among his boots, where they built their nests and laid their young in the cupboard of his clothes press, the contents of which had long been pawned. The mice scurried away as he entered, and he swore for the thousandth time to import a cat, but the mice looked upon this oath as part of the noise a door made in shutting. Werner was careless where he lived and how, and had no particular but rather a conventional dislike of mice. He had no philosophy of life either, and no opinion to offer about morality, war, religion, or any other topic ; he thought deeply without coming to any conclusion, and lived pretty consistently without making any rule. He was one of those men to whom acquaintances attach themselves, whose remarks are valued, and whose actions are outside the pale of comment : a man about whom scandal is silent, who is credited with no vice and no virtues, who influences the thoughts of those he comes in contact with, and, though opinionless, sometimes sows the seed of definite opinions. He never put himself about

for his friends or indulged in any practice of unselfishness.

Werner came into his room and lit the candles upon his desk, and the light revealed the anxious eyes of the mice peering from their holes, also the broken state of his sparse furniture, the cracked stove that even in winter was never filled with fire, the uncurtained window, some panes of which were replaced with paper, and the bed, rough from many nights of broken sleep, heaped with soiled and ragged bedclothes. The irregularities of the glass in the window sparkled where they caught the candle-light and recalled the sparkling lights on the dark blackness of the river. Werner sat down and wept, wept for possibly half an hour; his nerves were in a very bad state. Then he addressed the mice and summoned them to sit about him, but the mice, who had come out of hiding again, fled, and he pretended to be disappointed. He wept again, because he wept habitually; it was a part of the mortal illness which consumed him. He also wept because to-night he had been reminded that he had reached his zenith and fulfilled the promise of his youth, and that whatever more he did was only at the stingy charity of fate.

The tears dried in his eyes, he groaned within himself and wrung his hands, miserable, miserable because he was at an end, jealous of youth, jealous of the future, jealous of joy. Then suddenly his gaze became fixed on the glitters in the window

and in his mind they began to take rhythmic form, and the form became words, and the words a far-off version of what Martin had said to him up at the castle. Soon, infused with youth, he began to write. He wrote steadily, without exertion, and without physical discomfort. The peahens were being born. He wrote until dawn, until his false youth ebbed away. When the candles guttered and went out he rose, pulled off his boots, took a draught from a black bottle, and fell upon the bed; then he pulled the clothes over his head and went to sleep, but he tossed for some hours in spite of the drink from the black bottle.

All this time Martin was walking about the castle yard. To Martin the success of this new venture seemed sure, and he was so happy that he could not return to bed. He walked up and down the castle court-yard and up and down the terrace amongst the ghostly shadows of the ruins. He grinned to himself with wet, glistening eyes because of the happy vision of his future happiness. The wonderful bliss of premeditation upon the seeming certainties of the future is only to be compared with the bliss of the discovery of love. Waves of sensation passed from his head, the seat of the imagination, to his abdomen, the seat of the knowledge of pleasure. He quivered, he yawned, he smiled, he stretched his arms, he struck the parapet of the terrace with his flat hands and leered at the view, he threw a little stone into the woods below the castle and then sprang up on to a dangerous

spot and recklessly flung back his head and laughed without making a sound. He struck his chest and shook his head from side to side, and blinked his eyes from which tears fell. Then he took to prowling again in and out of the shadows, mad with youth and hope and dreams of success and the May moon. Soon, needing exertion, he climbed over the parapet of the terrace and made a perilous descent into the woods, and then wandered far, roaming away in the beautiful woods till dawn. He rested now and then upon the ground amongst lilies of the valley and violets and Solomon-seal, somnolent among green leaves that seemed white and immobile as wax in the moonlight. He crushed them down with his body as he lay, lost, and in paradise, half awake, half asleep, without knowledge of anything save beauty and happiness. He slept among them and awoke soon, to rise and pass on to some other dell or grove under the lightly leaved beeches. He walked ankle deep in young grass and knee-deep in blue flowers, through blue groves where the moon did not pierce, and at early dawn, when moon and morning struggled to make wan each other's light, he slept under tall cherry-trees that grew among the larches. Day broke and birds sang; the nightingale redoubled her endeavours that had ceased in the last hour of night, a blackbird called in the grey branches of a cherry-tree, and Martin awoke again refreshed, an ordinary young man, sane and joyful. He lay and watched the cherry blossom become tinged

with pink and recommence its business of falling that had ceased during the night. He called to the blackbird until it flew away, then arose and wandered towards the river. Soon he emerged into the vineyards, where the young leaves of the vine were spreading out their hands. The vine stalks were red in the rising sun, and the leaves were of the most delicate green in the morning air, and the shadows of the hills upon the vineyard were deep blue. The sky was azure and the air white, thin and pure, and so clear that trees and dwellings could be distinguished in the far-off Rhine plain. All was clear, fresh, and lovely: pale green, golden, golden-red, and blue. All the world was these four colours in the morning sun. There was no smell save the smell of the dew, and no noise save the deep running of the wide river far below and the noise of the birds.

Martin stared and stared, and thought how strange day and night were, how empty day-break was, how crowded evening. How could one be responsible in this new land for deeds and thoughts of last night's old one. There was no link between the days. Only a stupid man or a priest could bind himself by the vanished day before. Freedom! To-day! This morning! Birth! Rejuvenation! The past is dead. We pluck from the past, but it is dead. We thrust back a hand to take from out of the coffin. To-day there is no yesterday, only to-day. Even in war we can say to-day is to-day. Enmity died in the night.

Martin felt clean and free as he stood at the top of the vineyard on the hill, but by the time he had got to the bottom he perceived that he was partially covered already with the flies of memory and thought. He said, bowing to necessity, that this could not be helped. He also felt hungry, and this, and the magnetism of human life, drew him back towards the town. He walked by the river, where many flowers grew, and when in the course of time he remembered Bertha he gathered her a bouquet of these to please her. He walked back to Heidelberg picking flowers, the embryo of a famous man, with full intuitions, crystallized ambitions, and a temporary loss of youth.

CHAPTER IV

THE spring passed into summer, and Martin began to assume the behaviour of a young genius. All that he wrote, whether it was suitable or not, he labelled "Peahens," and shut up in a black portfolio. He wrote a great deal his imagination ran wild. Werner called the peahens the rabbits, because they bred so often in so short a time. He became imperious towards his family, particularly towards his mother; he became silly and superior in female society. He changed his mode of dressing and wore check ties, and had his hair cut in a different fashion. He began to quiz girls in tea-shops and to take an interest in the fair performers at the theatre; he changed from a simple, dull boy into a conceited, flashy young man, absurd, and yet charming, who made girls giggle and chatter and nudge one another and become hysterical because they couldn't keep their animal feelings in order. He was a young animal himself, infatuated with the idea of himself as something god-like. The human element in him was reduced to a minimum, was reduced to his attitude about himself. It is human to be god-like and animal-like at the same time; the

result is human because it is absurd. Martin's godliness was symbolized by check ties and straighter shoulders, tremendous energy and noisy rushing from place to place; but his godliness itself was symbol of the awakened animal just as the girls' giggles were symbols of the corresponding animals in them. Physical excitement and dull contemplation produce artistic work. Some artists are hermits, some are rakes. Some men produce beautiful things from the sparks that excitement clashes out of them, particularly from the sparks of sexual excitement, passion, and the rest of it; others by deep thought drag wonders from the dark unknown.

Martin began a series of more or less serious love affairs. The first began upon the first of June, when he reached the age of twenty-one. All that he did before with a feeling of daring he now did naturally and as a matter of course. The first result of this new attitude was the Romance of Lili. Lili was fair, sweet, and round, and so far influenced him that he threw into the peahen portfolio what afterwards became a ballad. The affair began upon one of those pleasant expeditions which the English call "excursions" to the small town of Eberbach.

Early in the morning of the first of June a party of friends arrived, according to pre-arrangement, at the Schüler's house. Markheim came, Lili and Max Bauer, Frau and Fräulein Offenbach, Herr Karl Fink—a placid, fair young man—George

Fink, his solid elder brother, Peter Flettner, and Mimi Adler, two young and detached people. Of all this company, Lili Bauer was the queen and her brother Max the death's head. Frau Offenbach paired off with Papa Schüler and Frau Schüler with George Fink, two suitable and heavy couples of chaperons. Martin at once pounced upon Lili and Markheim upon Bertha. Peter Flettner got the ugly, but good-natured, daughter Offenbach, and young Fink got Mimi. Max Bauer was offended because Martin had forgotten when counting the men to count himself, so there were too few girls. Everybody tried to think of a remedy, but Max refused to call for any of the girls suggested, or to share any of those there, and took upon himself bearishly all the railway ticket-buying and cab-ordering. The party left the house at seven, dressed in expedition clothes. Everybody had a sandwich box suspended from a strap passed over the shoulder, all had walking sticks with points, and stout boots. Some of the men wore Tyrolean shorts and round felt hats, and Martin wore a loose black suit and a red silk tie. The ladies were clothed regardless of years in cotton dresses with full skirts and collarless, square-cut bodices with elbow sleeves, and each carried a jacket of some dark colour in case the temperature fell. Soon the men were carrying the jackets, also the parasols that some girls thought fit to bring as well as walking sticks, but Max collected these sunshades and threw them overboard when they were on the steamer,

because he found they would ultimately devolve upon him.

At seven-thirty they all boarded the little steamer that goes a few times a day up and down a short distance of the Neckar; and once aboard Max discarded the sunshades and the party threw off the cloud his grumbles had spread over them, and all at once began to be very merry.

At first Martin was shy and stiff with Lili, and had nothing to say, but at breakfast, which as they were a large party was served for them at a table in the stern, Lili began to thaw him. She thawed him with honey. There was honey for breakfast, a kind of sweet glue, of which Martin, who was greedy, took so much that it ran all over his plate.

"You must be a bee," said Lili; "how fond you are of honey."

"He loves honey, he has a sweet tooth," explained Frau Schüler; "he always did love honey."

"I hated honey," said Martin.

"Hated honey! oh, Herr Schüler!" cried Lili.

"I don't now," said Martin, whose face suddenly relaxed; "I like all sweet things," he said this in a lower voice. "My name is Martin, Lili."

Lili blushed and said, "Don't, don't!" making believe he was pinching her.

Throughout breakfast they carried on a slight flirtatious warfare, and after breakfast Herr Schüler recommended them all to watch the fine scenery and not to miss any of the noble castles because it

would be dark when they returned. Lili and Martin, however, hung over the stern, and Martin told Lili all about himself, and squeezed her hand until they wondered why they both felt a little sick.

" I feel sick," said Martin, suddenly and quite candidly.

" Don't look at the water," said Lili; " it comes so endlessly from under the boat, so wriggly and streaky, I feel as if my own eyes were looking backwards."

" When we walk up the Weg after dinner," said Martin, " will you walk with me? " He said this seriously. They leant on the stern rail, looking at one another.

Lili gave him her hand behind her dress. " Of course," she said; " I am your day-friend."

" My life friend," said Martin, whose heart jerked suddenly.

Then they joined the others, and Martin became facetious and witty, and in due time they arrived at the landing for Eberbach, where, amongst much hilarity and jokes about the size of Frau Schüler and Frau Offenbach, all of which were deeply appreciated by the crew, they got off the boat and into rickety pair-horse carriages, which dragged them through the little streets, an extremely short distance, to the best restaurant. Here they all got out amongst many more similar jokes, some of which were vulgar, and crowded, laughing and giggling, into the restaurant. All things

had been ordered beforehand, and the proprietor showed them into a pleasant garden where tables were ready set for dinner. Soon, under wistaria boughs and lilac blossom, they devoured a large and substantial meal, in the middle of which Frau Offenbach exclaimed to Herr Schüler by pre-arrangement :

" Why, to-day, of all days ! It is dear Martin's birthday ! "

Everybody remembered what they had known all along, and amidst general confusion, which Martin enjoyed, the lost jackets were called for, found and rifled, and simultaneously everybody presented him with mementoes. Martin accepted them suitably and thought " What will all these people say a few years hence ! Little do they think that soon it will be kind of me to speak to them." His left hand was pinching Lili's little finger.

In the course of time dinner and wine-drinking came to an end, and the ladies went indoors to rest and the men lounged in the garden smoking cigars.

Max spoke to Martin.

" How old ? " he said.

" Twenty-one," said Martin.

" Not really," said Max, " I would not have thought it."

" Which way ? " said Martin, and laughed when Max allowed himself to be scored off.

" My sister is nineteen," said Max.

" Oh ! " said Martin.

" She is a pretty girl ; she ought to have a mother. I have had her on my hands four years."

" Get her a husband," said old Schüler, and young Fink said :

" Martin, aren't you sweet on her ? "

" Who knows ? " said Martin, looking at Fink, with the eye that Max could not see half shut.

Fink went into roars of laughter and came over to Martin. He talked into Martin's ear, chuckling.

" You are walking up the Weg with Lili ? "

" Yes."

" Walking ? "

' Yes ; so so."

" We are all going to the tower."

' One needn't hurry."

" Better not hurry back ; one can miss the boat."

' Yes," said Martin, " perhaps. What are you talking for ? "

" Mimi and I intend to be lost ; do you get lost also, it will look better."

Martin grinned. " Very well, then. Where will you be lost ? " He felt like a benevolent uncle.

" On the way from the tower. We will take the first wrong turning on the way down. Do not deceive us, Martin. Mimi and I can rely on you ? "

" Perhaps," said Martin.

" Can you manage Lili ? "

" Women ! " said Martin. ' I cannot answer or Lili."

" Then I will answer for her myself."

Soon they all came together again and set off in grim earnest to make the two hours' walk to the tower on the top of the Katzenbuckle. The girls felt they were going a walking tour, and looked it; the men felt the same, but said in answer to their cries:

" The Katzenbuckle! Only a step! Dear girls, what an outcry about a mere stroll."

The walk began briskly, but degenerated into an amble, which became slower as the paths became steeper. The party spread out further and further, until Max, who found it impossible to be genial with any of the pairs, had arrived at the tower, and Mimi and young Fink, who were deeply in love, were half a mile behind.

Martin sauntered with his Lili, pausing every now and then to gather wild flowers and make silly speeches.

As they neared the tower Martin said:

" Lili."

" Yes, what is it you want? Another kiss? " said Lili softly.

" I want you to love me."

" Love you! " Lili was serious.

" Yes, to love me."

" I shall always love you," said Lili sentimentally, " but you will only love me a short time."

Martin ought to have protested, but he said:

" Why? Why do you say that? "

"I do not know," said Lili. "It is true."

He ought to have protested again, but again he did not.

"Love is not to be calculated in lengths," he said; "only in depth."

"Oh, no, no!" said Lili; "the noblest quality of love is endurance."

"Perhaps," said Martin; "but we don't calculate by endurance, any more than if you live long we shall honour you any more than if you die young." He was not feeling inclined to argue clearly. "Love is deep," he went on, "or shallow. A long shallow love is worth less than a deep short one."

"A long deep one is best," said Lili.

"Well, will you love me?" said Martin.

"How?" said Lili.

"Let us say short and deep." Martin embraced her and gazed into her eyes. "I love you to-day, Lili," he said; "who knows if I shall love you to-morrow. Love me in return to-day."

"How beautiful," said Lili, whose eyes had tears in them; "how beautiful your voice sounds; what cruel things it says."

"Love me to-day," said Martin, drawing her into the woods aside from the path. "My birthday! On the return from the tower, surrender your sweet little hands into mine and let me lead you. Lili! look at me. In the eyes—no, in the eyes. Don't you love me? Ah, yes, you love me, I can see. Lili, I adore you! Kiss my

lips! Dear little girl, yours are as sweet as honey. 'Lili Lara' I shall call you.

"Lili Lara, listen to your lo-o-ver.
Lili Lara, give him all your heart.
Lili Lara, give him all he asks you,
Lest he leave you, lest he should depart
After other maidens, Lili Lara!
Lili Lara, Lili of my heart.

"Hush, don't sob. I made that up. The tune too."

"What does it mean, Martin? Do you love me, or are you just pretending? I've loved you for so long."

"I mean it, Lili. Come, we must walk on. I mean it. Promise me—after the tower—to love me. My birthday, on my birthday. Walk on, we must catch up, Lili!"

"But——"

"I'll see you come to no harm. I swear, Lili—be mine."

'Yes, we must walk on. I will think! Oh, we must not do anything silly. Libet, you know——"

"Yes, hush; I know about Libet—her lover was a cad." Martin took her arm and led her slowly onward till they regained the path higher up, and neither of them spoke again until they got to the tower. In Lili's mind consent and refusal were alternating mechanically. No, yes; no, yes; no, yes. Her reason had left her; she felt that if No was top when next Martin spoke to

her she would refuse, if Yes she would consent. Her heart was beating heavily, but she did not recognize it; she felt as if some rhythmical machine were swinging in her. She did not anticipate love recklessly and gaily; she was numb, cold, and terrified, but she felt only the swing in her body and the regular beat—no, yes; no, yes; no, yes.

Martin walked beside her with a sense of control in his mind like an expert contortionist on the tight-rope, like an expert engineer with a delicate machine ready to give the slightest touch with his hand, to exercise exact judgment in his mind. He advanced beyond his years to the expert age of thirty or so, and the next musical composition he wrote benefited by it, gaining sureness and finer balance.

The situation was not in Lili's hands.

At the tower were several excursionists, many from Heidelberg, who had taken advantage of the Friday facilities and of the fine weather. Old Herr Schüler met several friends, and soon the chaperons, who were all tired, settled down with other old gossips and began even there on that summer afternoon to pull to bits their absent friends and enemies, and to discuss trade, crochet, cookery, and babies, according to their sex and taste. Fräulein Offenbach and Bertha, who were tired, also sat near them with their fiancés. They sat near enough to hear what was said upon certain interesting subjects, because they were both soon to be married and lost no opportunity of collecting

evidence upon certain events of married life. They both hoped Flettner and Markheim could not hear; but Flettner and Markheim did hear, and felt hot and happy inside. Soon they definitely joined their elders, and the young ones—the boys and girls, the children as they were thought of—went up to the top of the tower, and, straining their eyes to see the Swabian Mountains, the Black Forest, and what not, saw nothing but the human being next to them, and heard nothing but one voice.

There below the old tower sat the old men and women like mushrooms, gossiping of life, and round the top like birds hung the young ones, chattering of love. The old ones, unmoved, impervious to the weather, blind to green trees and blue distances and the romantic far-off presence of the mountains, sat like besiegers who bide their time at the base of an impregnable fortress, and the young ones, sensitive to light and darkness, and to the black name of Schwarzwald, flew free in their minds across rivers and across plains, even to the sea, even to that same forest, free until the inevitable return, the moment of capitulation, of humiliation, and descent.

At five o'clock the sandwich boxes were opened and their contents eaten, and at six the cavalcade, which had been joined by many acquaintances and friends, began the long descent.

It was easy to stray, easy to get lost, and at seven o'clock young Fink and Martin and their

girls were far away, unmissed from that straggling stream. Fink winked at Martin when he was going to disappear, and Martin gave him ten minutes' start, after which he himself plunged with Lili into the secretive undergrowth; but he did not tell Lili about Fink, nor did Fink tell Mimi about Martin. Men are keepers of secrets.

The four returned home late by the last train that night. Lili and Mimi were silent and white. Fink was pale, but deeper than ever in love; passion had filled him and was not yet exhausted, and Mimi knew even in her tired mind that he would marry her. But Martin was calm; he had no love feelings one way or the other; he was possessed by a thought which afterwards became a long ballade. He felt simple, and was simple in the midst of complexity, straightforward and sure, honest in his dishonesty, momentarily complete, perfectly wedded, perfectly divorced. Love and fancy had vanished, and his thought, fitting perfectly to the rhythm of the clanking train, found him pure, virgin as white snow, master of himself, isolated, a monk, above his companions in virtue and in everything else, alone in their midst, inhuman, silent, and remote. Beside him sat his girl, begetter of his thought, but he had forgotten her; she was dead to him. There she sat—used, inferior, and dismissed, he had no further need of her. She was inferior, she felt inferior—inferior and feminine, until she looked across at Fink. He too looked

puny, microbe-souled, even less than herself. She at least was associated. All of them were but the ether round the planet, but Lili, perhaps, was a little moon. " Oh, dear," she sighed to herself, " how clever he looks, and how stern ! I suppose I ought to be proud. Oh, oh ! I hope nothing will happen—why was I such a fool ! I hope nothing disgraceful will happen."

Thus they came into Heidelberg and were greeted by frantic friends, but Martin, who with perfect self-possession helped Lili, almost fainting, to the ground, said, " We are late, yes. The gods be damned : in the twilight we took the turning down to Zwingenberg."

CHAPTER V

AFTER the Eberbach expedition Martin thought more of himself than ever. He had long stretches of manhood when he forgot that he had recently been a boy. He became for days together a stranger in his family, and Bertha and his mother sighed to one another over the change that had come upon him. Now and then he relapsed, wore his old clothes, and was gay and affectionate with Bertha, imperious and gentle with his mother, dull and sulky with his father, until he met Fink, or saw a new piece at the theatre, or got a girl to kiss him at the café again. In his mannish moods he would talk of earning money and living away from home; he would look upon Werner as a rusty old chap; he would say to his friends, "I'm getting that chap Werner to do the dirty work for my opera"; and to Werner he would say, if he met him in the street, "Hello! how's the work going?" as if he were a master-builder, too rich to worry, and Werner were a very young foreman. He seemed to think Werner had only one object in life, and so Werner had; but that was to live until he died, not to slave at Martin's peahens.

In one of these moods he went to see Werner.

"Hello, Werner!" he said, "I've come to see how the brood is."

"What brood?" said Werner, desisting from writing an address to the spirit of the age.

"My hens."

"Oh! oh!" said Werner, "they have gone to roost."

"Where? Can I have a look at them?"

"If you like," said Werner; "they are in that drawer."

Martin pulled out the drawer hastily, and found a few sheets of paper in it.

"What!" he cried, "four sheets! In two months only four sheets!"

"Well," said Werner, "you don't want me to hurry your life's work. Masterpieces are the blood of the spirit. The condensation is a slow business." He did not tell Martin this was the beginning of the fair copy and that several sheets of unintelligible hieroglyphics lay in the drawer above.

"I'm damned!" said Martin.

"To disappointment," said Werner. "Slow, slow, slow; life's slow, isn't it? Why don't you and I wake up famous one morning instead of having to creep slowly up the old mountain to the tower. When we've been to the tower we can enjoy ourselves."

"You old beast," said Martin, patting Werner's shoulders roughly; "who told you?"

"Max Bauer and I do talk when we meet," said Werner.

"Max!"

"Yes," said Werner; "he is a shrewd man, and terrified lest his sister should do anything foolish."

"Lili is a little ass."

"His dying mother handed her over to him," said Werner; "he's sentimental about her."

"Well, I say," said Martin, "there is no harm in it, you old crow, you old Puritan crow. Nobody knows, and it's all safely over."

Werner laughed. "You are irresistible. People cannot refuse you!"

"They can if they want," said Martin; "we are all human beings."

"You seem to think yourself a little divine now and then, all the same," said Werner. "I think you think yourself superior to the world in general."

"What if I do?" said Martin; "what if I am?"

"It's of no consequence," said Werner, and settled down to write.

"You are a bear," said Martin.

"Well," said Werner, after a silence, "sit down; don't raise the dust with your feet. My mice will lose their way if you obliterate their tracks, and perhaps miss even the last train."

"Oh, stop!" said Martin, sitting on a stool with his hands in his pockets.

"Listen," said Werner, "to a dying man. You

cannot have life both ways. You are either superior or equal. If you are superior you must not expect in others the strength and virtue which you find in yourself; if you are equal you must not act like a superior."

"Wise, wise words!" said Martin.

"Yes," said Werner, "beyond your comprehension."

Martin lost his temper.

"See here," he said, "give me those peahens. I'm going."

"No," said Werner, "they are incomplete."

"Give me them, I say," he said, stamping his foot.

"The manuscript is mine, unfortunately," said Werner.

Martin went out of the door and cried, "Keep it! keep it, destroyer of my idea!" and began to run home in a rage; but before he got half-way his rage turned into a thought which he put down directly he got back.

All his emotions that summer became converted half-way through into music; the music generally was good, so there was some excuse for his grotesque superior airs, and the evaporation of his constancy.

He returned to Werner that evening in a boyish mood and brought some of his tunes. Werner disclosed the hidden manuscript and they talked amicably. Werner told him he had improved in originality and quality, and Martin professed in turn to admire the peahens.

Martin became human and sentimental.

" You're my only true friend," he said, grasping Werner's hand. " Life is difficult."

" It is," said Werner, " for all."

" I wish I could love deeply and truly," said Martin. " The fact is, all my feelings change into tunes after a little. What am I to do ? "

" Your constancy becomes immortal," said Werner, putting both hands on his arm. " Dear Martin, I love you—a declaration of passion from a dying man. Immortalize that."

" Unfortunate, but I cannot," said Martin ; " when I don't want to I must, and when I want to I can't. It's all chance—all chance. I've no will in the matter."

" Some day, after long practice," said Werner, " one gets the will in the matter."

" Why can't I go straight ahead like plain sewing women do, like a steamer ? I don't believe I shall ever arrive at anything. I'm over twenty-one, and yet there is nothing in sight."

" You've developed late," said Werner ; " but that will not hurt you."

" It's all such a mess," said Martin, picking up a poem Werner had just completed, and tearing it absent-mindedly into little bits. " Nothing definite, all a mess—such a mess."

" Perhaps your first ambition is beyond you," said Werner, making a slight grimace, and sweeping the bits of torn paper off his desk on to the floor.

" Perhaps so, damn it ! " said Martin sullenly.

" I must write songs—bah! songs! chansons d'amour! waltzes, pooh! The gods be damned; why don't I obey myself, why don't I do what I wish? I've not the strength of character. I'm not a genius, that's it. Why don't I produce operas instead of portfolios of silly tunes? My head swells. I think I am being magnificent, writing wonders! It draws together, I've written a fragment after Chopin! Look at all this! To-morrow I'll begin again. Only that bit is worth anything "—he began sorting through his portfolio—" and that, perhaps, and perhaps that, and those two also. That's all there is out of the peahens."

He sighed and dropped the portfolio on the floor.

" Do you want to make money? " said Werner.

" I should not mind," said Martin; " then I could live alone. I believe the atmosphere of our house prevents me writing."

" Finish that ballade," said Werner. " It is good, almost very good, but quite public taste. Finish several of these tunes, publish them, get assurance, get a grip, make money. Then look at the peahens, and if you don't fancy them, invent something else."

" Thanks," said Martin, freezing for a moment; " I want your advice, don't I? "

" I don't know," said Werner, " perhaps not. Your instinct will guide you. It is dangerous to interfere with genius."

Martin became hot again.

" I only found that women were ever able to deal with genius," said Werner ; " they know all about sacrifice and hero-worship. *Cherchez la femme*, that is my advice. Yes, that is the best advice—*Cherchez la femme.*"

" It is curious," said Martin, " but that seems true. All great men——"

" Yes, yes," said Werner, " have picked the brains and hearts of a few women. Beautiful things and clever things all originate in a woman. The paradox : the greater are the lesser ; the lesser, greater. Out of sweetness came forth strength. Out of meat came forth the eater."

" We excel," said Martin, meaning men.

" Until the day of judgment," said Werner.

" We are strong and ' do ' after all," said Martin.

" The women have not the women," said Werner, " but only the men."

" Are you a feminist ? " said Martin surprised. " A believer in equality ? "

" Yes," said Werner, " I am ; but, as the world is, things will always appear unequal. I believe in the appearance of unequality. That perhaps is fact. Such an unequality is perhaps a real unequality, however. We are beginning to get philosophical. Do not lead me to discuss fact and fancy, spirit and matter. I get cold shivers."

At that moment Max Bauer came in at the door.

" Hello ! " he said softly, in a gentle voice ; " is that Martin Schüler with you, Werner ? "

" Yes," said Martin, " it is me."

" Shall I go, Werner ? " Bauer continued ; " are you discussing business ? "

" No, no," said Werner. " Max, we have decided that women are inferior and equal."

" Platonism. I am not clever. Are you going to argue to a conclusion ? " Max was quite sociable and not at all bearish. Evidently daylight did not suit him and nightlight did.

Martin felt eager to argue. He had a superficial intellect quite apart from his musical intellect, and he liked indulging it.

" I don't think so," said Werner ; " that is the conclusion : women are inferior and equal."

Max stayed a few minutes, but he became overwhelmed with shyness in the presence of Martin and felt his gruff mood creeping upon him again, so he said good night as politely as possible, and went away.

" He dislikes me," said Martin.

" He is fond of Lili," said Werner.

" Ah, well," said Martin, " I seem to make a mess of everything."

" Do not begin all over again," said Werner.

" No," said Martin ; " let's finish about women."

' We had," said Werner, " everything is finished. Finis ! I am about to die. I hope I shall finish your peahens."

' Don't ! " said Martin, " you can't possibly die."

" It is quite easy," said Werner.

" Oh, my God, don't die ! " said Martin, who had never met death.

" The consumption of my vitals is almost complete," said Werner.

" What you need is to go out," said Martin ; " you're pale. You must eat, sleep, and take exercise."

" I cannot walk, unfortunately," said Werner.

" Can't walk ! "

" No, I gave up walking last week."

" God ! What do you do ? "

" I crawl on my hands and knees."

" God ! how horrible ! God in Heaven, how horrible ! "

" It is horrible. Martin ! is the door shut ?—Martin ! "

" Yes."

" I'm at my end—I must talk. I feel rejuvenated—I feel your age. I must tell you—what it means—to me—to die." Werner jerked out the phrases. " I am cynical. I am sour. You know me. I know myself, I know all, I know everything—I am wise, wiser than Pallas. I write well. I am jealous—I am jealous of genius, of youth—oh, of youth, of youth, of youth ! Now I am ruining the personality I created before you—I am disclosing my weaknesses. I want to tell you—it means a lot—for me—to die. Coward I am." He smiled and blinked his eyes. " I'm going out. Quite dark—black—soon. Contemplation does not harden me to that fact."

" Oh, Werner!" said Martin; " Felix, my friend, my friend!" He grasped both Werner's hands. " Shall I die with you?"

Werner's face looked suddenly overjoyed.

" No," he said; " I can manage by myself"; and held Martin's hands very hard and drew in his breath whistling through his teeth.

He suddenly relaxed. " Sentimental," he said; " are we not? Good night."

" Am I to go?" said Martin.

" If you please," said Werner. " Don't talk about me to your friends."

" Well, good night," said Martin. " Shall I come to-morrow?"

" As you wish," said Werner.

Martin went away feeling cold and creepy, but during that night he remembered that Werner had indirectly called him a genius, and with the help of this he got back his confidence and his self-esteem. After that he had another bout of manliness, during which he took Werner's advice and completed a few things for the publishers.

CHAPTER VI

DURING the next few weeks Martin spent much of his time with Werner, and became so accustomed to the sight of Man succumbing to Death, that when Werner actually died he was not shocked nor did it seem abnormal and peculiar to discover that that which was was not. It seemed to him that Werner had been sinking slowly into a hole, and he would have been more startled if Werner had suddenly sprung out of it than if he had suddenly shot underground. Werner died very slowly; day by day he became a little worse; day by day his man's character slipped off him, till at the end he was naked as it were, his real self, inexperienced, gentle, and affectionate. As his body died his mind discarded the clothing it had pulled on itself. He threw off his knowledge of the world and was left a believer in the simplicity and honesty of the human race. He threw off his hard, useful, intellectual, critical faculty, and was left ingenuous. He threw off his inexorable attitude towards smallness of mind and weakness and was left weak himself. A delicious feeling came over him of soft May winds and incapacity and convalescence, when the bouts of pain, which

were infernal torture, sank to soft, pleasant currents under morphic influence. He lay dying in his bed, cleansed and sweet-sheeted by Martin and Bertha. The dust had gone from the floor, many mice had died in traps, his desk was pushed against the wall with the lid shut over straightened papers. Nothing of this interested him, nothing he could not see without raising his head existed. He could see the sky out of the window, he could see the ancient cobwebs under the ceiling, he could see people from the knees up when they stood by his bed.

Max Bauer used to come. He could see more of Max than anybody, Max had such long thighs. He was tall in consequence. Max sympathized with him in the right way, agreed with him that to be dead would be unpleasant and that the greatest catastrophe of existence was very near, quite near enough to be alarming. Death was horribly alarming when near ; it made one cry in the night, and want to catch hold of a human being's hand. Surely a man could not die if he held a living man's hand. Such things do not happen. A living hand does not clasp a dead one. The life would run through it out of the finger tips and bring the dead life back.

Werner wondered what death was. Max thought it was being extinguished.

" It must be," said Werner, childishly. " I feel as if I were going out. Out and out and out."

" It is very queer," said Max, " to see you slowly passing away. I feel as if the surplus, what has gone

was floating about like a fog in the room. Do you feel that you are going out of the open window into a distant country ? "

" No," said Werner ; " I am getting slower and slower. I feel I cover less and less space. I cover now less space than my body. When I have shrunk to a point in my mind I shall die ! "

" Lili is ill," said Max.

Werner was not interested ; he was immensely selfish just before his death ; his own affairs alone interested him. He said lazily, however :

" Perhaps she will die ! "

" She is making herself lovesick over that fool."

" Oh," said Werner softly, " Martin ! Love is a wild business, Max. I remember," he went on, drowsily, " I used to fall in love when I was young. Always in love. My digestion got out of order, I used to be so violently in love. I cannot remember all their names now—Marie is the only one. She was pretty—I cannot tell you how pretty—with soft pink cheeks and curly hair. She married her cousin because of family affairs. I believe I am dying because I let myself go to ruin for a short time when she got married. I am dying of love, Max, old boy. Perhaps Lili will."

Max looked tenderly at Werner, and Martin came in.

" You look better to-day," said Martin.

" He is worse," said Max ; " one day nearer his eath."

" You look certainly better," said Martin.

"Bauer, you are a gloomy beast with your depressing rubbish."

"I am worse," said Werner; "I think I am paralysed in my legs. They do not seem to be there. I feel like a pool of blood on the mattress."

Martin put his hand under Werner's back.

"No blood; that wound is quite clean and bandaged."

"I did not mean that," said Werner with a sigh.

"No," said Max, "he meant he felt as if he himself were reduced to blood and lay in an oval patch on the mattress."

"Yes," said Werner.

Martin blushed dark red, and said:

"I see."

"Play," said Werner.

"There is no piano," said Martin.

"What did he say?" said Werner to Max.

"No piano," said Max, softly.

"I cannot hear them when they talk loudly," said Werner, who was evidently beginning to dream again.

Martin stood uneasily by the bed.

"He'll probably die in a day or two," said Max.

Werner woke up at the mention of his one topic of conversation.

"Yes," he said, "I am nearly done for."

"Bertha sent these," said Martin, producing a pair of bed-socks and an enamelled tin of soup.

Nobody laughed. The situation was one which only men can achieve without humour. Martin

put the objects down on the floor and said, after another pause:

"Well, good-bye. You certainly look better."

When he was gone, Werner said, "Do I look better?"

"You look restful," said Max, "and the afternoon has flushed your cheeks."

"Perhaps I am better," said Werner. "What did Doctor Kapp say to-day? Perhaps I shall recover. Max, if I recover, I'll lead a totally different life. How stupid I have been; what a lot of important things I have ignored. The things I put first! At one time I put enjoyment, and then love of women, and then work, and then my health. That was too late. If I recover I will walk about amongst men and women treating them all as human beings. I fly from one extreme to the other —Oh, goddess! Oh, slut! Oh, harlot! Oh, virgin! Oh, saint! Oh, villain! Oh, genius! Oh, idiot!" He began to ramble on about women. "I have so much to say. I must talk, Max, about men and women. Be a happy man, Max. I think I am spreading out a little. I feel a little better, perhaps." He lay silent and as still as a corpse. Then he said, "I like morphia. The sky is blue to-day. Could the window be covered? Those blue squares in the window come so close to my eyes and then retreat into little specks—beads running up and down strings. The world used to be—Ah!" He suddenly groaned and screamed and the pain began again. Max let it rage a little

while until he began to look like a wild beast possessed of a devil, and then gave him another dose out of a little bottle.

Somebody knocked at the door, and Lili came in.

"How is the poor man?" she whispered to Max.

"It is only a question of time, according to the doctor," said Max. "He is unpleasant just now; he has been in pain. He is so full of morphia, I had to give him a very large dose. I shouldn't look at him."

"I would like to," said Lili.

"Well," said Max, "I would not look at him; you might feel sick."

"You are becoming a doctor, Maxishe."

"Yes," he said; "they are all fools."

They stood at the bottom of the bed. Werner was labouring under the morphia. He did not look a man.

"Terrible!" said Lili. "Poor creature! If I were a doctor I should overdose him. Isn't it queer, he doesn't look real, Max. He looks like a dog."

"Terrible!" said Max; "he was himself a little time ago."

"He looks savage."

"Yes," said Max.

"I feel he dwindles every time I come to see him —a little and a little less. Can he hear us?"

"No," said Max; "he is fighting with dreams."

"Oh, Max, isn't it horrible? Dear, dear Max!" Lili began to cry a little. "We used to like him, and talk to him. It is quite incredible. I brought him some flowers and some eggs. I can't give them to him, can I? I feel ashamed of having brought flowers and eggs."

"He'll die soon," said Max; "he says himself his soul is dwindling to a point."

"How dreadful!"

"He is quite interested in it," said Max; "he raves now and then of course, when it bores him, and he realizes he really is about to die."

"Poor man! Max, does Martin come here?" She put her hand on her brother's arm.

"He has been," said Max dryly.

Things seemed bare to Lili, and raw, standing there before Werner's half-dead body. She felt at the place in creation where we have our bodies opened and their workings displayed together with the workings of our souls. She was not aware that those were her precise feelings, but she went on talking in a manner which showed that they were.

"Max," she said, "I cannot seem to think Martin and I were very wicked in that wood."

"It was not your fault," said Max.

"He seems somehow a special sort of man," said Lili; "I can't blame him either. I feel if anyone ought to be blamed it is me. I have been thinking a lot, Max. Max, it isn't a very simple world, is it?"

"No," said Max.

"It seems so mixed. I can't quite understand," said Lili; "and in the middle there seems to be something beautiful and powerful, and that sometimes, very often—oh, I can't explain—seems, it seems as if, well, it was a kind of Martin."

"You have him on the brain, that's all!" said Max. "He is an ordinary sort of young fool."

"No, no!" said Lili, 'he's not!" She forgot Werner and leant her hands on the footrail of the bed, gazing into space. "He's not. He's above all this—Heidelberg and us. I can't explain. It seems a bit as if he was lent to us, like God lent Christ to Mary."

"Rubbish!" said Max; "he isn't divine."

Lili went on talking, as if to nobody. "Divine, that's it; yes, that is what it is. If the Kaiser's son came to your school, Max, and sat in your class, you'd know what I mean."

"He won't, thank God!" said Max, looking at her. "You have got him on the brain."

"Yes, and in my heart," said Lili. "Oh, Max! I'm pulled to bits, and I'll never have him. Oh! I feel like wanting to be his house servant."

"Rubbish!" said Max. "Don't be so silly, Lili; he's a rotten character."

Lili flashed round at him. "He's not!" she said; "he's a genius!" Her voice was so deep that Max started. "Oh, Max!" she said, "I am so lonely." She threw herself in his arms.

"My pet," he said, "don't cry; be brave,

sweet girl. Werner was just as unhappy when he was a young fellow."

At the mention of Werner, Lili recollected herself.

" Oh, how wicked of me to talk like this and forget that poor man! Poor man! I'm not the unhappiest, but I'd rather die. Max, if you knew, oh, if you knew!"

Max was bending over Werner. He came round to Lili after fidgeting with the sheet in some manner in the dusk.

" He's asleep," said Max, who knew that Werner had just died; " let us go."

" Where shall I put the eggs and flowers? " said Lili; " where shall I put them? " Max took the eggs and put them in his pocket. " The flowers—put them——" he caught his breath because he had been very fond of Werner—" put them—on the sheet." She put them on the sheet, and knew by the stillness that crept through the silence what had happened, but she said nothing, and was not shocked because she had no direct evidence of touch or announcement. She was hardly aware in her mind of the fact: it pervaded her senses, her body. Max drew her away; he was trembling. She gripped his arm to comfort him. Now she knew for certain that Werner was dead, but her tact kept her from speaking. She led Max to the door and they went out of the room together in silence.

CHAPTER VII

WERNER was a Roman Catholic, not by belief but by accident. At the age of nineteen he had been very religious and had become a convert. Since that age he had remained a Roman Catholic, but it was a mere superscripture, a label directing in which cemetery he should enjoy his last repose, and what ought to be done and said when he was consigned again to the dust. The Church never forgets her children, and soon after his death, which Max made officially known, a Sister and Father came to do what they could for his stray soul, and the Sister remained to watch and pray all night. It was a privilege to sit by the beautiful dead; and besides, sleep is easy in a chair with arms.

Directly Martin heard of Werner's death he seemed pleased; he sighed with relief, and if we always said exactly what we felt, would have ejaculated, "Thank God, no more going up those horrible stairs!"

Martin was not cynical; he thought he was sorry Werner was dead, and said so. Bertha was very sorry, and cried a little over his "happy release," as her mother called it. Martin said, "Poor chap! poor chap!" a few times, and then "Poor chap!" like a machine that makes

one last revolution before it gradually stops. Werner belonged to the past, to-morrow he would be quite past. Martin spent that evening alone in his room meditating; his meditations strayed from love, from Lili whom he no longer loved, to burials and after death. He paused a moment to remember Werner's great kindness to him in not moralizing over his little affair with Lili, and suspected Werner of arguing Max into quiet anger. He wondered if Max would ever murder him in a temper; he seemed so fond of Lili, seemed to guard her like a father-brother-husband. Short of that, a man like Max, a mere schoolmaster, could do him little or no harm. He dismissed the thought; it was too trivial. He was right in dismissing it; Max was too sane and gentle to do anything violent, and too fond of Lili. What gossip originates in meditation! After a time he began to conjecture what influence Werner had had upon himself. It seemed little or none; Werner was an admirable person; he left one alone, yet made one realize the value of endeavour and attainment without ever talking about them. But, of course, he had abominable faults and deficiencies; he was so excessively private, that was his worst fault: private was written all over him. He began to die when he began to give away his privacy. He was conceited and had no end of an idea of himself, and was terribly contemptuous of less brilliant people. Martin was glad he would no longer be made to feel small, and yet he felt

lonely. He seemed to have become, without his own consent, an independent man with his own future upon his hands. There was no one to complain to, no one to give him sincere praise. He felt hurt. Poor Werner! A lump came in his throat. He thought he was sorry for Werner. Poor Werner, he did not even live to finish "the Peahens." Martin began to wonder where "the Peahens" was. He had lost acute interest in it for the time being, though he still looked upon it as his coming masterpiece, a kind of life-work. "It must be in his room," he said to himself. "The devil! I'd like to have a look at it." He began remembering his former thoughts about it, and the memory roused in him a new burst of ambition. He thought what a little he had written for it, and then what a lot; what a lot if he counted arias, what a little if he compared part and bulk. The delicious, rapturous harmonies were still behind the beyond. The astonishing modulations still bridged the gulf of unknown heavens. The brilliant variations, the broad and deep basis of the whole, still rose a pyramid in an ethereal desert. There was good and strong music in his black portfolio, and he was only twenty-one. The beyond, the heavens, the desert, were in his mind. He was not yet able to see them; but every month, every emotion, every piece of knowledge, every attempt, he came nearer to them. Some day he would be able to visualize them, some day to realize them. Realization for him meant to be able to

turn into sound. He felt proud of himself and a little sure. Some things he could never forget, some things caught in his mind like the cogs of a mountain train. He could not slip.

Suddenly it dawned upon him that all Werner's manuscripts would sooner or later be seized by his creditors. He was known to be in debt. He would be buried to-morrow; to-morrow morning somebody would go and seal everything with red seals. That would be a catastrophe for the peahens. The creditors would either publish it, or require large royalties for its loan from him, Martin. Martin Schüler became very agitated. There seemed no chance of doing anything. He wished he had made Werner give it to him that day. He hated the thought, but gradually it seemed to him essential to pay the corpse a farewell visit, and, if possible, to steal the manuscript at the same time. When he had formulated it, he put it away from him, but it recurred. He tossed up, but forgot to remember the result, which was against going, because he knew he must go. Soon he put on his best black clothes to pay his last respects to the dead, and told his mother as he went out of the house that he was going to have a last look at Werner. He looked agitated, and his mother said sentimentally to Bertha, as he went out, "Poor Martische is deeply moved for his friend." Certainly his intentions were hateful to him, but it seemed absolutely necessary to get hold of the peahens that night. Several times, however, on

the way to Werner's house, Schüler stopped and hesitated; once he stopped because his deed seemed sacrilegious, and because he did not want to go where Max Bauer and others probably were; once because he might be caught in felony, and once because he was afraid of spirits and devils; but all the time the fact was he could hardly bring himself to go near a dead body. At last he came to Werner's house. It was nearly midnight and very dark. He had a covered lamp in his hand.

The door was shut and locked, the bell wire was rusted. Upstairs Werner lay dead on his bed, and the Sister with the dead, old Sister Eulalie, had fallen asleep, so Martin, even if he had wished, could not have got anyone to open the door for him. He tried the door softly; it wheezed on rusty hinges, but remained closed, so he was forced to get in at a window. The felonious nature of his entrance led him to believe he was a criminal. He took off his boots in the deserted lower room and prowled upstairs. He prowled past uninhabited rooms, up the narrow old stairs—a stranger in a strange house, a stranger to himself. He almost stopped and cried out to himself, "Who's that? What do you want? Don't you dare to rob the dead!" Then he remembered that the ghoulish prowler was himself, and thought of battlefields and fingers cut off hands with rings still on them, widows hoping for mementoes, and prison.

Werner's door was open. Martin shaded his

lamp and went in. The fat old Sister snored in her chair, her beads in her hand. Beside her lay a long white object on a bed, and on the top of it reposed a bunch of mixed autumn flowers. Probably Werner's breast was under the flowers. Martin moved softly round past the old Sister, and took a hasty look at the man under the sheet. He had a very faint resemblance to Werner—like a bad drawing by an amateur. Martin knew he was Werner only because he knew that Werner had died, and lay dead under that sheet on that bed. He put back the sheet reverently and mumbled something about God, and then went to the bureau where the manuscript usually reposed. The bureau had been reversed and pushed with its face to the wall in order to give the dying man more room. This was awkward. Martin did not want in the least to wake the old dead-watcher by dragging the bureau about on the bare boards of the floor. He began to be frightened again, and almost thought of abandoning the manuscript. He wished there had been other tenants in the house, then Werner would have been put in the Morgue. After a moment's hesitation he inspected the bureau and found that it could be got into without moving it, for it had a sloping front which let down. He prayed that the poem was not in any of the drawers. It was not in the top. He cursed. Fear, desire, and rage made him strong and resourceful. He became a maniac for possession. He lifted the whole bureau bodily by

its top and turned it. He did it quietly. It was a marvellous feat of strength because the bureau was quite large and also full of papers. The manuscript was not in any of the drawers. He put things in order; but not daring to repeat his feat, which had strained him a little, he merely put the bureau on a line with the wall, and left it.

Maddening! In rage one has queer ideas. Martin became certain that the manuscript was somewhere about the dead body. Horrified with himself, he searched everywhere else, but the idea followed him about the room, pointing to the corpse. At length he forced himself to approach it, and turned back the death sheet a little. The eyes seemed eternally shut, stuck down with glue. He drew the sheet further back, and with his eyes fixed in fear upon the dead features ran his hand under the cold body and felt along between it and the bed. He expected to feel a pool of blood, just as earlier in the day he had expected to feel a pool of blood.

In the mattress was a lump. Joy bounded in his heart. He knelt down, and, careless of the corpse, pushed the mattress up. There was what he sought! He dragged the papers out, crushed them into his pocket, straightened up the dead as well as he could, and scurried out of the house.

He had become a thief!

For several nights afterwards he dreamt of that most ugly, cold, unrecognizable piece of flesh that had been his friend; and his distaste for the name and manuscript of the peahens lasted a whole year.

LEIPSIC

LEIPSIC

CHAPTER VIII

As an oyster covers a pearl with scales, so Martin covered Werner's death, and Lili and the peahens, with days and months of forgetfulness. Twenty-eight months lay smooth over the past, and only those with long memories and awkward imaginations thought less well of him than he did of himself, and saw the little piece of grit that had got into his shell. Martin was now in the first fullness of manhood. His father was dead, therefore he had a respectable income, and his mother lived with her daughter and son-in-law, the Schüler-Markheims. He had been to Paris for a year to study the Modern Movement, and considered himself therefore a man of the world. The municipal band played from time to time one or two of his lighter compositions, the theatre had produced one of his sentimental operettas, he had set one or two bad songs, by bad local poets, to indifferent tunes ; for these reasons persons began to point him out to one another, and being well-off and good-looking the best people in the town invited him to their parties.

Some people thought he took his elevation in society a little too much for granted, and his sister held her breath when she heard him for the first time joke with Frau Professor Kort. His sister was not invited to those houses which he frequented, but the great cannot monopolize an art exhibition, and it was there Bertha heard him make the joke that finally pointed out to her that indeed her brother was lost to her for ever, and had sailed out of the dim light of her own social life. The joke caused her to hold her breath, but looking down his body instinctively to his feet, she saw how classically they stood upon the floor and how his elegant body was perfectly poised upon them. She blamed him because he was level-headed and at home where she was modest and nervous, but she admired him because he was liked, and because she had had a great deal to do with his upbringing.

Bertha's friends were astonished that she did not devote her conversation to this family marvel, pray her prayers to it, and spread her husband, her house, and her children, born and unborn, upon the background of the canvas of its life, or, to use a prettier simile, throw her love, her babes, her happiness like roses on her brother's path. Frau Schüler, her mother, joined with her in her reserved and decent attitude, and people said they had quarrelled with Martin, and, because he was hardly ever with them, that Herman, Bertha's husband, had forbidden him to come to the house

This gave rise to the opinion that some people were cutting off their noses to spite their faces. Herman Markheim had been heard to say, it is true, that Martin was not his sort; and people added, because he, Markheim, didn't care for young fools who painted the town red, even if they were Wagners. All this did not affect Martin. He was unconscious of Bertha's pride and of what people said about his affairs. He lived alone in a good part of the town. He had few worries. His love affairs were amiable and a little sordid; he had no serious friend like Werner, and the delicate, too-familiar relationships of home-life no longer existed to trouble him.

When his last piece of band-music had been played so often that the brain was sore with hearing it, and people began to ask themselves what he would do next to delight them, he condescended to try an experiment upon them: he produced, with the aid of the graduates and undergraduates of the Heidelberg University, a short musical drama, entitled, "The Poverty of Crœsus." The production took place at the theatre about midsummer and astonished Heidelberg, though it depressed the actors, that is to say until the full report was published in the newspaper. The newspaper was so eulogistic, and the parents, aunts, and lovers of the actors so dithyrambic, that Heidelberg was full of swelled heads for several weeks. This, again, did not affect Martin.

There was at the University of Heidelberg at

that time a young man of the name of Steinbach, an ugly and thick young man who had come to Heidelberg for a summer course to fill in the time between the end of his career at Leipsic University and the beginning of his career at he knew not what. Like many other brilliant young men who are too rich and not scholarly enough to enclose themselves for life in a classical or philosophical world, he was lost when his terms at college came to an end. He had a strong desire to do something, particularly something that would entail notoriety, so he went to Heidelberg University in order to get to an out-of-the-world place where youth was rife and where he could think. In a fortnight, owing to having assimilated its spirit, he decided that to remain was waste of time. He thought of going to Cambridge in England. The day that he was introduced to Martin Schüler by von der Gorst he changed his mind. This was before the performance of "Crœsus." Von der Gorst was to be " Crœsus." He was chief classic of his year, and had a fine baritone. When he introduced Steinbach to Martin, Steinbach shook hands, and said he was extremely pleased to make the acquaintance of one with such a future before him. He eyed Martin steadily, and determined not to decide then and there if he really had a future before him, but to wait. That same spring afternoon, after the departure of Martin, von der Gorst told him about the approaching performance. When he was tired of Gorst's florid optimism about

the affair, he went home. He sauntered under the budding linden-trees along the river road with a feeling of joyful interest in his mind. The houses across the way, and the river on his right, and the dusty, sun-flecked road, and the dry, dusty gutter pleased him. He liked them for the first time. This morning they had tired and bored him, now he liked them. The soft spring breeze blowing in gentle puffs from the river, the quiet, slow-moving water, and the gentle shivers of the little leaves on the trees, soothed him deliciously; he sauntered along, noticing the summer-like quality of the dust, the summer-like rattle of the carts and cabs along the road; the houses across the way no longer showed naked through the bare boughs; green leaves partially hid them, and soft air permeated with sunshine, with the scent of trees and particles of dust from the road, focused them, so that they did not appear, as in wet and cold weather, to be starting forward into the road upon passers-by. Steinbach had taken a fancy to Martin, and one is always happy when one has just taken a fancy to somebody. He was not thinking, like most people, "I must see that chap again; shall I ask him to the theatre, shall I go to his rooms, shall I write?" He was thinking, "I shall not make his acquaintance just yet. I will notice him and glean facts about him, and when I know him, perhaps after he has produced his opera, I'll get him to know me." He paused and looked over the river. "When I've heard his opera," he

decided, "it will be time to get him to know me."

Not for a moment did he think that anyone else, or any number of anyone elses, would crowd him out; he was quite certain that at his own time he would be able to get what he wanted. Of what he wanted he had no clear idea, but a thought not expressed in words began to haunt his mind. He walked on for five minutes, then turned down a narrow street to the left and disappeared from the public on the river road.

CHAPTER IX

STEINBACH sat amongst the audience at the students' performance of Martin's "The Poverty of Crœsus." He sat solidly and silently, with wide open blue eyes behind powerful pince-nez that magnified them to imbecility and made them bulge. His round, pink head seemed stuck with glue into his tight, shining collar. His nose rose into a snub above a short golden crop of hairs that he wore as a moustache. His mouth was large and full of admirable white teeth, and his hair, which was sandy, was parted and brushed in the English fashion. He kept his eyes fixed on Martin, who conducted his own composition, and his mind became concentrated critical faculty and power of judgment. Martin looked imposing in the conductor's chair. His black hair was thick and oily, and brushed back in the solid wave set in fashion by Beethoven. He had a small, dark, square moustache clipped along the line of his upper lip, and down the lines from his nose to the corner of his mouth. He might have been twenty-eight years old, but he was barely twenty-four. He wore pince-nez, but rather from affectation than from necessity. His head, arms, and shoulders

looked fine and able against the light background of the stage, and Bertha, who was amongst the audience, sighed with relief because he showed no signs of physical decadence. He wore a fine black cloth coat and dress trousers, the coat cut like a dinner jacket, no waistcoat, a soft white shirt, a high double collar, and a small black tie of the day variety that resembled his moustache and repeated its design. Upon his hands he had white kid gloves with black markings. Frau von Arnim, who at that time had a sentimental attachment for him, thought this was a pity because it hid the fascinating way his fingers turned up at the ends. He looked conceited and prosperous, and, from the back, impressive. From the stage he was terrifying; one could see him bite his lips and swear when response was not forthcoming. His manner assured one of failure before one had failed, and frightened the last vestige of confidence out of the performers. Von der Gorst, who acted Crœsus, alone saved the situation from fiasco. From the outbursts of applause, however, one would have concluded that a masterpiece had been most magnificently exhibited

When the affair was over, and von der Gorst was in the dressing-room with his wig in his hand, Martin sulked in and burst into self-condemnatory rage.

"The gods be damned!" he cried; "I have made a fool of myself. What acting! What apes, what cows! They could not put their tights

on decently. Can one conduct when one is distracted by crooked leggings! Damnation!"

"The acting was awful," said von der Gorst, disinterring his young moustache from grease paint; "that was not your fault, old chap. You pulled horrible faces!"

"Did I?" said Martin; "what has that to do with it?"

"There was a man in the audience," went on von der Gorst, "with ghastly eyes. When I first came on I could not see anything else. They bulged and shone in that beastly dark cavern."

"What has that got to do with it?" said Martin. "People from other towns were there. I might have made a hit. It was a fiasco."

"No," said von der Gorst; "nearly, but not quite. The music was all right. You cannot help the sheepishness of the students."

"Whatever failure there was," growled Martin, "my fault or not, will be put down to me. I tell you I will never produce another cursed thing in this hell of a town."

"Don't pull faces next time," said Gorst, laughing. "Really, the audience thought the whole affair wonderful, and, for a citizen of this town, rather magical."

"Oh, yes, say straight off it was good for an amateur!" Martin scowled ferociously, and snapped his pince-nez, which he held in his hand, in half with his fingers.

Steinbach sauntered in.

"You are not an amateur," he said quietly; "may I compliment you, Herr von Schuler?"

Martin was not called *von* Schüler as a rule Steinbach thus paid him a delicate compliment.

"Those were your eyes, then," said von der Gorst, and laughed.

Steinbach smiled and showed all his beautiful white teeth. "Windows which not only admit but also shed the light!" he exclaimed, and sat down on a packing case marked "Manskoff & Söhne."

There was a pause in which nobody said anything. Von der Gorst went on with his operations, which seemed to be rather painful; Martin fitted and refitted his broken glasses together.

"You have broken your glasses," said Steinbach. "The glass is broken, and the play is done." Martin took no notice, and Steinbach looked at his watch and said very politely, "May I call upon you to-morrow?"

Martin felt pleased. He answered cordially, "Any time. You may walk home with me to supper if you care to." The truth was he wanted to hear somebody criticize his music, particularly somebody who was not stupid. He wanted to say then and there, "Tell me what did you think of the thing?" but von der Gorst was present, and he also felt averse to open the subject although he longed to do so. If he was shy it was a new sensation. He would not have felt shy if he could have thought of a good roundabout sentence to begin with. He was too tired to go straight to the point

and afraid, because he was tired, of hearing something not to his liking. He thought he would be sick if in answer to a plain question Steinbach had said his play was bad, or might have been better, or that he had flown too high, or that he, Steinbach, would like to hear something else before thinking him a genius, or even that it was quite good.

Steinbach looked at his watch again, and answered, "Thank you, I will." Von der Gorst was exposing a tender fencing wound on his cheek; he looked at Steinbach out of the corner of his eye, who stared solemnly back at him. "That looks very painful," said Steinbach; then turned to Martin and asked when and where he was to meet him, or if they were going now.

"Meet me in half an hour by the church in the Markt Platz, if that is not too late," he answered. He wanted to find out what Gorst thought of Steinbach, though he really did not care. He was sensitive and silly that evening.

"Very well," said Steinbach, and turned to go. "We shall meet again." When he was out of the room, von der Gorst said:

"That's a queer fish."

"Yes," said Martin; "his appearance is unprepossessing."

"Look here," said von der Gorst, through whistles of pain, "come to lunch to-morrow. Damn this plaster!" Blood was trickling down his cheek.

" I cannot," said Martin, for no reason but that he felt inexpressibly bored with him at that moment. He was pressing a towel to his face, and Martin thought he looked second-rate; he smelt second-rate now Steinbach had been in the room, and Martin wondered why he had remained to hear any of his opinions about anything. It is rather difficult not to appear at a disadvantage in clothes semi-classical and semi-modern, with a towel round one's neck and a sore cheek, especially when one is very tired. Martin made no allowances. Von der Gorst thought, " I shall not see much of this young man any more," but added aloud, " We are both tired." It is easy to come to the end of a friendship when tired, but he hoped, like everybody else, that when they were themselves again everything would be as before.

Martin watched him uneasily for a few minutes and longed to go away. Soon he said, " I must go."

" You have plenty of time," said von der Gorst, rather sourly.

" Not too much," said Martin; " good night."

" Good night," growled von der Gorst. He had a grievance. Martin had neither thanked him nor complimented him. With this grievance he consoled himself, and pretended that he had ceased to think himself a friend of Martin's, and said so the next day to some of his acquaintances.

Martin met Steinbach at the church. They were both early, but Steinbach was there first.

"I am afraid I am late," said Martin; but Steinbach replied, "No, no, I am early." It was a light night. The full summer moon shone down into the Market Place, and in the light darkness the roofs of the houses showed reddish, and the leaves of the trees greenish, and the brown woodwork of the windows and doors brownish, like a photograph faintly washed with pure colour. There were clouds of thin, filmy white in a sky that was almost blue, and through and between the clouds a few pale sulphurous stars showed. The two men walked out of the indigo shadow of the church across the light grey open space, around which stood white and grey and dark-coloured houses. An open cab rattled across the square, making a stony noise. One of the men said something to the other, then the cab stopped and they both got in it. The cab turned round and the unwilling horse was again driven away from his stable. He reared up his head at the end of his long, straight neck, and, pulling the cab by his shoulders, clattered with his heavy hoofs and sloping haunches out of the Market Place towards the New Bridge. He could hear everything, partly because of the still night and partly because he was tired. He stretched back his ears to listen, because when he listened he forgot he was pulling a cab. He could hear the rattle of the cab wheels and the unoiled sigh of the springs, and the driver's sleepy, "Tchk, tchk," and the voices of the two men in the cab talking about plays and theatres. Above these sounds

he heard a buzzing noise in his head, a buzz in which the noises of the trams and shouts and footsteps and wheels of the past day were all combined, and again above that he could hear the river moving —the sound of water. Perhaps that was the reason why he stretched his neck and kept his head up.

"This is nineteen-three," said Steinbach, in the middle of the bridge; "let us produce something at Leipsic in nineteen-four."

"Us?" said Martin.

Steinbach looked at the moonlight on the water, and let it sink into his mind. It was sinking into Martin's soul, as all such things did without him making any effort. Steinbach answered as he looked at the water, "I can write better stuff than those Crœsus words." He went on, "We can live in Leipsic. My father will back Crœsus for you for a week at one of the theatres."

"It is very kind," said Martin dreamily.

"Not at all." Steinbach's face beamed in a radiant smile, which immediately woke Martin out of his short dreaming fit. "My father has nothing to do with his money. What a queer little place this is," he said as they turned over the bridge into the new part of the town.

"A queer little place," assented Martin.

"Why do you live here?"

"Force of habit," said Martin.

"You do not look a native."

"I was born and bred here."

'Aha," said Steinbach, as other people say "Yes," "and bedazzled."

"I was more bedazzled in Paris," Martin laughed.

"Were you born in the house we are going to?"

"No," answered Martin, "down near the Markt Platz."

"Of the people—quite so," said Steinbach; "the upper classes are too well fed to breed a genius. They say over-feeding and idleness produces women and inferior men. I am the product of luxury."

"When I was in Paris," said Martin, "everybody was very effeminate."

"Women are the children of civilization," said Steinbach. "All the primitive, horrid, grand states of being, such as war and savagery, produce men, and silly women." He laughed then, and said, "You did not become effeminate in Paris?"

"No," said Martin; "but it civilized me."

Steinbach did not expect him to be capable of making a confession about himself. What he said was perfectly true. Paris had had an immense influence over him. He was quite incapable at present of midnight rambles or ecstasies under the moon. He had forgotten the unchained feeling of his twenty-first year. His ability to call the past the past made him appear to be a new kind of man to those who knew him intimately. He had given up worshipping nature with the passionate abandonment of his youth, and his vitality, stimu-

lated enormously by the new things of Paris, was expended upon technical rather than passionate art, and amongst drawing-rooms and clubs rather than amongst hills and valleys. His work gained in suavity and brilliance, but it was not profound. "The Poverty of Crœsus," the outcome of his Parisian year, had bouquet rather than depth, and was more original than inspired.

They arrived at Martin's door. The horse no sooner heard the chink of money than he strode round and was off in a hurry to his stable. He hoped there would be no one in that fateful Markt Platz. Late diners-out always hailed his cab in that wretched place.

Martin opened the door with a key and they went in.

"I wait on myself at this time of the night," he said, taking his companion into a room where an elaborate cold supper was put in easy reach of a chair drawn up to the table. Steinbach thought of an illustration in a romantic tale which he liked when a child, of a young musician supping alone at a table covered with a lace-edged cloth and spread with delicious viands. Martin lit the candelabra and turned off the electric light.

Steinbach told Martin of the illustration, who did not know it, never having cared much for books.

They ate a great deal, and drank a great deal of white wine, and Martin at last said, "What is your opinion of my opera?"

"I thought," answered Steinbach, looking down

into his glass, from which he extracted a little bit of cork with his little finger, "that your music was very good and original. I should like to have a share in your fate. I listened very carefully to your music because I intended you to ask me my opinion. You should never conduct your own things. You see what they are meant to represent rather than what they do represent. Composers usually misinterpret their own works of art. An outsider would have marked those interesting subtleties which doubtless you know nothing about. There was an hiatus or two where you found yourself over-interpreting. Do you object to my criticism?"

"Not in the least," said Martin; "go on."

Steinbach smiled broadly. "I've nothing more to say. If you will live with me in Leipsic I shall be delighted. I will marry you to some good woman."

"No," said Martin; "I will not marry yet."

"A loose character, are you?" grinned Steinbach.

"Not more so than others," said Martin.

"I do not approve of moral looseness nor atheism," said Steinbach in a slow, humorous voice.

"You sound tolerant," Martin answered smiling.

"Quite so," answered Steinbach, "but I am not." He smiled again. "I am a prig but not a prude." It was impossible to tell if he meant what he said, or whether he were the loosest man on earth.

"I want to give you an impression of myself. See? That is done."

Martin had received no impression whatever of Steinbach. He seemed to assume a kind of green virtue. He seemed very easy. He made statements about their partnership as if that were easy, and about producing Crœsus in Leipsic for a week as if that were easy.

"Show me your works of art, Schüler," he said after a pause, and Martin showed him all his better and more recent productions, and played, after a fashion, all that he thought would redound to his credit. Steinbach murmured, "Yes! Good! Quite so! Go on!" at intervals, and listened with calculating, critical ears, but gave no opinion on any particular fragment. At last he said he must go, and without any further talk departed. When he had gone Martin felt pleased, praised, and happy. He smiled at himself in the glass before he went to bed; for he often looked at himself in the glass when he lived alone for companionship. After that he got into bed and fell asleep remembering non-existent beauties of his Crœsus.

CHAPTER X

STEINBACH came round very early the next morning, before breakfast even. Martin was still in bed, but when he heard his unmistakable, pleasant voice arguing with the servant, he shouted to him to come up. Steinbach stood in the doorway opposite the bed, with a grin on his cheery face.

"Good morning," he said, making an idiotic bow with his head and neck only. He looked as if he wore a buckram waistcoat to keep his fatness within bounds. He was very stiff in the body.

"I came to say—er—thanks." He interrupted himself to come into the room and sit squarely on the bed. "I came to say," he went on, "what day, when, now, soon, or never, when shall we go to Leipsic?"

"Any time will do for me," said Martin.

"Very well, then, Friday of next week. Very good. You will come and live with me in Leipsic next Friday."

Martin laughed. "God! you do amuse me! You don't seem to think about anything before you do it."

"Don't I? It is all luck anyway, whatever happens; why spend too long thinking? Perhaps I have thought of this for weeks. Will this logic please you? I like your music, I take a fancy to you, I want to launch you. Why not adopt you? See? If you have no objection, it is all serene."

"You amuse me," said Martin.

"There you get amusement: amusement is pleasure, pleasure is the aim of life. What more can a man want? My name is Bernard Christian Steinbach, at your service." He smiled all the while, and turned his smile on Martin from time to time like a searchlight.

"I'll get up if you will stay to breakfast," said Martin. "I feel too idle to dress this morning."

"Here is your vest," said Steinbach, leaning over from where he sat and picking up an object off the floor. "As a commencement of friendship I will valet you."

Martin laughed and put his arms behind his head, but did not attempt to get up. "You do amuse me," he said again.

"Leipsic is a nice place," said Steinbach. "I have a lot of friends."

"Your father is rich?"

"Oh, yes, quite well off. We have three houses. I will get the little town house."

"The prospects you hold out excite me." said Martin, sitting up.

"I am excited myself," Steinbach answered.

"Directly I saw you I was fascinated. I am clever to detect your genius."

Martin's excitement reached a high enough pitch to get him out of bed. He stood up in the middle of the room in his pyjamas and stretched.

"You have a good figure," said Steinbach; "I am disgustingly fat. You are handsome in a way. Did you ever see anyone as ugly as I?"

Martin did not reply, but took a tin case of cigarettes from amongst the jumble of rubbish on the table. He offered them to Steinbach.

"Have a cigarette."

"It is these horrible specs," said Steinbach, taking one. "I don't put my lights under bushels, do I?" He stopped talking to light his cigarette, and as he lit it his hand trembled a little.

"You have a shaky hand," said Martin.

"Quite so," he answered, "emotional excitement and no breakfast."

Martin struggled into his shirt and emerged rather embarrassed.

"If you get a dislike to me any time," his patron continued from the bed, "walk out of my house. Neither you nor I are to have any debts to one another. It is always wise to start with an understanding."

"Yes," said Martin, "it is always desirable to be definite." He was feeling that he did not care for Steinbach very much at that moment.

"You sound curt," said Steinbach in a gentle voice as he got off the bed. "I do not think I will

stay to breakfast after all." Then he almost simpered, "Nine a.m. is not conducive to emotional crises. Good-bye."

"Good-bye." Martin opened the bedroom door.

"May I come this evening?"

"Certainly," said Martin, as Steinbach passed through. "I shall be delighted"; but he was thinking, "I can still refuse! I can still refuse! The way of success is up strange ladders."

For financial reasons alone Martin decided to accept Steinbach's proposal, and when he arrived that night and walked lovingly into the lamp-lit room, Martin said solemnly:

"I have been thinking over your proposal. I wish to thank you and to say how much I appreciate your interest in me. I accept your offer with gratitude."

"Just so," said Steinbach. "It is a queer world." He sat down opposite Martin in an easy chair. Like him he wore dress clothes, as if on a formal occasion. "We shall be sitting together like this in Leipsic, in neither your house nor mine, drinking neither your nor my wine."

Martin laughed. "It is impossible to be solemn with you."

"Quite so," said Steinbach; "we shall become familiar, we shall be rude and quarrel and get on each other's nerves."

"Help yourself to the cigars and wine," said Martin, pushing a box and a glass across the little

table. The room was warm and pleasant, the lamp cast a comfortable light, the wine-glasses and the bottles on the table sparkled like jewels. Smoke accumulated in the top of the room, and red shadows of it fell on the faces and hands of the two men. Beyond the circle of light cast by the lamp was a deep brown gloom. The walls of the room sank back into the darkness, and the floor fell away into deep pits at the sides; the two men sat like giants on the hump of the world with their heads near the sun and their shoulders in the clouds. Bright corners of frames and ornaments on the walls gleamed like distant stars. What would come to them out of the abyss? When Steinbach received the burden of Martin upon his mind he felt the floor revolve quickly under his feet, and his chair move half a pace; a lump came into his throat and he felt happy. After a silence he said:

"I have pushed my way into your life. I have been meditating it for several weeks. This was a good opportunity."

"You seem to run on wheels," said Martin, "and to glide through brick and mortar."

"I am quite concrete. Feel my hand."

Martin felt his extended hand, and Steinbach grasped Martin's with it. "Do I feel genuine?" he said, looking at Martin seriously, who threw off his embarrassment with an effort.

"Yes," he said, "I believe you are."

"You don't like me."

"How can I tell?" Martin evaded his assertion.

"It doesn't matter," murmured Steinbach.

With an effort Martin looked him in the eyes.

"I believe you are genuine," he said.

"Thank you." Steinbach dropped his hand. "Love is a peculiar thing. All attractions are peculiar." He smiled. "Aren't they?"

"Yes. That is easily said about anything. Help yourself to wine."

Steinbach poured out a glass and held it up to the light. "My father always looks through his wine," he said. "I gather nothing from the performance." He turned and held up his glass to Martin. "There is comradeship; may there be friendship!"

Martin answered with another quotation:

"'I and me are always too earnestly in conversation; how could it be endured if there were not a friend?'"

"I thought you did not read?" said Steinbach with a benign smile on his face. He sipped his glass, then took it from his left hand by the top with the outspread fingers of his right and put it on the table, after which he leant forward with his elbows on his knees and his fat hands hanging loosely from the ends of his arms. "You have read Nietzsche?" he asked.

"No," said Martin, "not Nietzsche, only the first part of the 'Superman' and the tirade against Wagner. I like the first part of the 'Superman'; I can understand it—my God! how humble you

make me—and I agree with his ideas about women and about stupidity. Perhaps I am an incarnation of the 'Superman,' I say to myself, to balance my humility. I suppose I read Wagner because I think myself his Elisha."

"I have been to Silvaplana, have you?"

"No," answered Martin; "I have been to France and Heidelberg!" He laughed. "The world-shaking genius will soon have added Leipsic to that list."

"Do you believe in palmistry?" said Steinbach, leaning a little further forward.

"The ministers of the dark science are always obscure and uncomplimentary to me," replied Martin laughing. "I am my own prophet. A woman once told me I was the most selfish brute imaginable."

"Tell me," said Steinbach, "what you thought of Nietzsche upon Wagner."

"There, I cannot do so," said Martin; "I have forgotten everything in it. I remember I thought that if Wagner could stir the passions of the body very deeply, and desired to do so, he was to be commended. He probably never set out to be an intellectualist. I am not sure that I like transcendental intellectualism."

"I do," said Steinbach. "That is the height of creation!"

"But Wagner was a humanitarian and a spiritualist."

"I should like to know," said Steinbach very

slowly, " whether you have any kindred feeling for other musicians."

" I do when I see, remember, or hear their music, particularly when I hear it."

" And what do you feel ? "

" I cannot tell you. Perhaps I think how clever they are to write this passage thus."

" Do you weep over Tristan and Isolde ? "

" I am sick of it. I have heard it ten times in order to try and discover the secret of its power. I feel now as if Saint Saëns had written it, but there is some remarkable work in it."

" Then you despise Tannhauser ? "

" Oh, my God ! Oh, my God ! " Martin pretended to be horror-struck. " I love that beautiful piece of hackneyed melancholy as if it were my own bad temper."

" You think Wagner was a humanitarian and a spiritualist ; you don't think he was an artist and an economist ? "

" A money-maker ? " said Martin. " Perhaps. Perhaps we all are."

" I don't think any of you have ideals," said Steinbach. " I don't think artists have."

" I have an ideal of fame," said Martin. " Once I believed I could clap nature into music by letting myself go mad on the hills and writing it down at home. Wagner can represent a storm, Debussy the wind in the trees. I can do better than that. I shall one day stir that question in your minds that has never been answered, and I will answer it."

"What is God?"

It has never been properly put into words," said Martin; "the answer can never be in words. When you hear me speak in my fashion you will know the answer."

"That is what you call transcendental intellectualism."

"I do not call it anything," said Martin. "Oh, my mind, my mind! It bursts sometimes for the experience it has not got. I am not such a fool as to believe my first opera will reach the goal. I am a perfectionist. I brought a great many 'ists' and 'isms' from Paris. I can tell you a great man has a long way to go to be his greatest. Like Napoleon, I sacrifice humanity to myself. When my conscience pricks me I say, 'Do not listen; these peccadilloes are incommensurate with the necessity of your greatness.'"

"You will sacrifice me?" asked Steinbach.

"What are you, after all, to me?" said Martin, "but a man who has made me a good offer? I think you are very kind. I hope I shall always behave honourably with you. I hope there will be no necessity for me to make myself the symbol of ingratitude."

"I have my aims," said Steinbach, good-humouredly.

"Nobody's aims but my own are anything to me," said Martin, also pleasantly.

"Perhaps yours are nothing to me!" Steinbach reached for his glass and drank once more.

"Perhaps I do not care a rap for anything but the picture of myself twenty years hence that I keep here." He hit the front of his head.

"'One ought to honour the enemy in one's friend,'" quoted Martin again.

"'Thou shalt be closest unto him when thou withstandest him,'" said Steinbach, but he had his doubts in his heart.

"I like you," said Martin; "we shall be able to be antagonists."

"I did hope we should have been friends."

"My antagonist is my friend, as you said yours was your friend just now," answered Martin.

"I had my doubts," Steinbach muttered.

'I could like for my friend," said Martin, standing up and going over to a portfolio, "a man whom I could trust with my bad temper and my selfishness, and who would demand nothing from me but the post of keeper of my unpleasant self. A friend that I have to consider and cosset I do not want. I am enough burden to myself without duplicating it. I would be faithful to that man; he would be the recipient of my bad temper until the end of my days. For kisses he could take my trust, for embraces my music, and for a reward those good days when I chose to be to him my other self. I would put his name on some of my music—on my masterpiece—unless in my stupidity I had made my heart captive to some wretched woman. Now you know what my ideal friend is; all others are my antagonists. I will have no friend that

is not ideal. I either like or hate my antagonists."

Steinbach frowned. "You are very difficult to please. Your friend will have to be a woman or a toady. No man could be your genuine friend."

"If I were divine I would dispense with women," said Martin. "I had a friend who told me the truth. Women are necessary to the procreator. I cannot become the father of a child nor of a masterpiece without a woman. The beauty and the voluptuousness of women are necessary to me. There is no substitute. I had a platonic friend. I became the manservant of the woods and all nature. Nothing has inspired me like the long falling hair of women or their wretched soft curving lips and their white skin. I tell you," he said, "I tell you, this portfolio is a record of my *affaires de cœur*. My brain becomes clear when I am intoxicated. I drink wine, I take opium to try and urge myself to splendour. If I am not at that point of my revolution where I am turning again into the region of love, I am only mediocre."

"That is youth," said Steinbach; "I am an ancient young man."

Martin hastened to seat himself at the piano. His hands trembled and there was sweat on his brow. The music he put up before him fell down on his hands. He swore and fixed it up again. Steinbach watched him calmly. His oiled hair was getting out of order and his eyes looked tired.

Steinbach felt sorry for him. He thought, "Poor chap, he must suffer from nerves." Martin began to play. He played several short pieces, songs and airs. Before some of them he exclaimed, "I did this in love," or merely, "In love"; before others he barked, "Not in love," "Drink," "Opium." He did not play from the music, he watched his hands. At the end he said:

"Steinbach!"

Steinbach jumped; the music was soothing him into far-away thoughts.

"You have noticed, Steinbach, what I say is perfectly true. I am a genius only when I am in love. When I am not, it is an intellectual feat."

Steinbach could not truthfully say that he had noticed, but he murmured "Yes."

"And I get tired of one woman, and they are so easy to get. My conscience! It is difficult for a man to have one. I do not let it prick me about such little things. I am not the shepherd of the female sex. If they have sense let them shepherd themselves; if they have no sense I do not care, they are not worth care."

"I know a woman to whom I will introduce you," said Steinbach, "whom I respect and honour. You ought to love the best women. The best women are better than the best men."

"Humorist!" exclaimed Martin.

But Steinbach was feeling sentimental. "I say better," he said as he got up—"better, because to-night I feel as though they were

better. Another night I might be more moderate. Good night, Schüler." He took Martin's hand again and held it a short time whilst he looked him steadily in the eyes. Martin felt foolish. Those blue magnified eyes might see him through and through, but he could not tell. They might be shining with triumph or with tears. They might belong to an exceedingly stupid man, but they were not the eyes of a genius. " Here is undiluted sanity," said Martin to himself ; " curse it!"

Steinbach dropped his hand and went out, and when he got out of the door Martin shook himself. " Ugh ! " he exclaimed to himself ; " he sets himself at me ! " and, flinging himself at the piano, he struck a note in the middle loudly with his fore-finger. He did not strike another. Instead of playing, as he had intended, he went to the brandy bottle and poured himself out a wineglass or two full, which he drank neat.

Steinbach stood outside in the rain and looked at the grey front of the house. He looked up at the roof and down to the pavement, and across from side to side. It was very hot out in the rain ; there had probably been a thunderstorm in the hills. He heard Martin strike one note and no more. Although it was hot he turned up his grey coat collar and pulled his white silk muffler to his ears. He could feel the rain striking the top of his English bowler. He waited five minutes on the pavement, patiently and, to an outsider,

stupidly. He was not stupid; what he waited for he could not tell, but he did not go until he was satisfied. Perhaps his body was waiting for his mind to come out of the house. After about five minutes he moved away, and walking on the outside edge of the pavement he came to the bridge. In the middle he stopped and considered. It was a long way down on his side of the wall to the bottom of the well. People outside might think him shallow. He had a sensation of depth, probably because he was looking over a high bridge into a void, but the physical and mental sensations coincided, though they were neither of them expressed in words.

When he got back to his house he was conscious of feeling better, though better than what he did not know. If he had considered his thought he might have got some light on the matter. He was thinking, " I at least am human," but like most thoughts it went through his mind without holding the attention. As he took off his coat he passed his hand over the wet, heavy material. His hand was as wet as if he had dipped it into water. He suddenly felt in sympathy with his father and sister and all his friends. It seemed to him that Martin could not get wet and would not notice it if he did. " They are all on my side," he thought. " Thank God ! "

CHAPTER XI

IT was January. Hella von Rosenthal sat beside Martin in a box at the opera. She was not listening to the music, nor was he. He was dreaming, as he always did when he heard music, about something totally different. Steinbach sat at the back of the box and watched him. Hella was pleased to be at the theatre with Martin, though she hardly knew him. Steinbach had not succeeded so far in making him her friend. She was thinking what thoughts he must be having when he sat in the darkness like that alone with himself. She wondered what it would be like to kiss him; she had only kissed Bernard Christian Steinbach amongst men, but he was an ancient friend. She felt quite cold when she went mentally through the experience of kissing Martin. "What hundreds of men women kiss in their imagination," she said to herself. The thought was quite pure. After all, kisses can be as chaste as roses and lilies. She wondered what it would be like to kiss him, because she wanted to know what he was like, not to discover what she herself felt. She next wondered how he would treat a wife or a mistress, and decided that he would treat a wife badly and

a mistress well for a short time and cruelly later. "Preserve me from ever being his wife," she thought. She looked at Steinbach. It excited her sense of humour to see him sitting at the back of the box like the keeper of a lunatic. She thought he had a bee in his bonnet. She thought him very good to let Martin spend his money; she thought him very silly to try and chain such an elemental being to his will. Martin came to her without a past, as so many of our friends do, like a mushroom. All she knew of him was his "Poverty of Crœsus," which had caused a considerable sensation amongst Leipsic critics. He seemed a mature person, full of self-command and ability. She tried to grasp the fact that Steinbach wanted to make him write a light opera. It seemed to her incongruous; it seemed as if her ancient friend was making a mistake. She felt herself siding against him. For years their indefinite feeling of friendship had not experienced anything so strong. They had supposed, in their gentle comradeship, that one day they would marry one another; she had called him her little fat husband in fun several times. They were to marry, they thought, at the end of his conscription; and again, after his university course, but nothing had taken place.

She wore a black velvet gown that evening, and a hat with ostrich feathers, and looked what we should now call old for twenty-six, but at the beginning of this century people looked women long before their girlhood was properly over. She was very

good-looking; some of her friends called her American. She was like a high-class German who has emigrated to America and returned. People sent her postcards of young women drawn by Dana Gibson, and certainly with her fine eyes, her oval face, and beautiful hair rolled up *à la Pompadour* in front and tied into a large queue with a black ribbon in the nape of her neck, she closely resembled their general outline, but her mouth with its definite curves betrayed her nationality. She had also a beautiful dimple in one cheek, and when she smiled she showed white, regular teeth, and everybody thought she was very handsome.

Martin deigned to admire her, but she seemed so cold and statuesque that he made no effort to approach her. He lolled back behind the ridiculous side curtains of the box, with their ridiculous fringes of little balls, and surveyed Steinbach and Hella. She put up her fan and talked to Bernard behind it. She referred to a joke of his about not being able to manage Martin unless he were going through a crisis or an emotion. Music was supposed to produce the former.

"A crisis or an emotion?" she whispered, looking behind her fan towards Martin.

"I'll hire a beastly piano-player and work my feet off," answered Steinbach. "Why don't you sing to him?"

"I? He has not asked me."

"Ask him."

" I don't know," said Hella ; " why should we squeeze operas out of the poor young man ? "

" I want him, don't you understand, to be famous. I do not believe he has grand opera in him. He has the other sort. Why, he has half written one. I cannot make him finish it."

" Are you fond of him ? " said Hella.

" Oh, yes, I am fascinated ; to tell you the truth, I am fascinated to see what he can be made to do."

" I think you are horrible."

" Who is horrible ? " said Martin, who had been trying to catch the conversation. He leant forward.

" Bernard is," said Hella.

" Why ? "

Hella laughed softly. " Oh, oh," she said, " I simply cannot tell you! That is forbidden, to betray a friend."

Martin lolled back again behind the curtain and screwed up his eyes.

" Fräulein von Rosenthal," he said, " all I can see of you is an obscure whiteness with diamond flashes upon it, all I can see of Bernard is a shirt front and a pair of rimless pince-nez, and those spectral fragments I tell myself are my friends, and yet against me."

" Quite so," said Steinbach, from the back of the box, and smiled.

" I see teeth now—the teeth of the devourer."

Hella laughed. " You are absurd, Herr von Schüler."

" I am serious. Perhaps you two spectres can

enlighten me. In this darkness I can speak frankly. Tell me, oracles, what does my lord and master select that I shall do for him? Why am I in Leipsic, what is the price of my liberty? Shade of man and woman, are ye an expression of the devil? Why tempt ye me? It is all too easy for me to follow. I wish to excel everything and all, you wish me to be easily brilliant. I have sold my soul to a rich man. I try to evade his persuasiveness; he brings me a woman to tempt me. I do not wish to be clever in your way. Give me a chance." He spoke in a low, quiet voice.

Steinbach leant towards him so that he could have touched him with his hand and said also:

"Give me a chance."

"The chances are all yours," said Martin. He turned to Hella. "Will you give me a chance? Your future husband is obdurate."

"I dare not interfere," she said with a smile, and looked the other way.

Martin looked at Steinbach.

"If I could only make out what destiny you have for me," he said.

"None, none," said Steinbach. "I want you to see what ability you have. I want you to see yourself. Give me my chance; you are welcome to discard me afterwards, but you will not discard me. I have studied you for almost a year; I know your abilities better than you imagine, also your temperament. Finish me the 'Coquettes.' You will thank me when you get the net profits."

"This is an odd moment to talk business."

"You are an odd man. Half the business of the world is done in odd moments."

The lights went up for the interval and Steinbach rose. His time was up for that day, probably for a long period; you could not badger a man like Martin. He managed to whisper to Hella as he went out, "Ask him to supper with us at your house and sing to him—sing to him."

When he had gone, Hella started a conversation.

"Don't you think," she said, leaning her beautiful arm along the edge of the box and looking over—"don't you think people are too isolated nowadays each within himself?"

"I certainly feel isolated," said Martin.

"Look over the edge of the box," she went on, "at that pink creature and that blue creature and all the other creatures. Do they look to have one single sympathy?"

"I do not know," said Martin; "I cannot imagine myself partitioned amongst many."

"No," said Hella, "we shall cast lots for you."

"That will be very charming; you will tell me who wins?"

"Oh, we shall not tell you! But the stakes will be enormous."

"What sort of stakes?"

Hella smiled sweetly with her eyes and mouth at him. "Oh, I do not know!" she said; "piano-players, reputations, peace of mind, self-

esteem, and all sorts of things. You see you are something to have and to hold."

"You are flattering me."

"Will you come to supper with us?" said Hella suddenly.

"I shall be delighted," said Martin; but he nearly yawned.

As they left the opera-house, Hella said to Steinbach, "He is coming. I am doing this to amuse myself, but how it will amuse me I cannot see." And then she laughed. "I am not in your power too, am I?"

Steinbach smiled. "Just so! You are part of the game!"

She put her hand on his arm and shook her head with a frown.

"No, no," she said; "you are too young to have a sensible woman in your power. I will do this to oblige you. I do not want a midnight name. You must remember I live alone."

"This will not make you a cocotte," said Steinbach. He smiled again. "Anyone can have supper with a man this twentieth century."

"I look upon you as my protector," said Hella, joking. "How you throw away my reputation! When a man wants anything every sacrifice must be made!"

Steinbach frowned. "If I could not trust him with a sane woman," he said, "would I send him to you?"

" It will not be a success," said Hella ; " bring him on Wednesday."

Martin had gone to look for a taxicab.

" What a long time that man is with the cab," she went on. " Don't bring him to-night; say I have a headache. Really, dearest friend, I only want myself and you, if you will come."

" Oh, darling Hella ! " Steinbach answered, " you ought not to fail your old friend."

" I wish we were married," said Hella with a sigh.

" We will be when the ' Coquettes ' is produced."

" I believe you have somebody else in your eye."

" No, I have nobody else in my eye. Here's Schüler."

" You look like husband and wife from the street," said Martin as he came up.

They laughed.

" I have known this creature from childhood," said Hella affectionately.

" And I this creature," said Steinbach, taking her hand.

" Leave me alone and get married," said Martin cheerfully.

They went down the steps and got into the cab. Hella got in first, Martin second, and Steinbach, who held the door, made a feint, cried, " All right " to the driver, and was left standing on the pavement as the taxi buzzed away.

" Hullo ! " said Martin, leaning out of the window, " where is he going ? "

"I do not know," said Hella.

"I am trapped," Martin ejaculated, as he sank back on the seat.

"We are trapped," said she.

"It is impossible to escape that man," said Martin, half seriously. "One day I shall shoot him."

"Yes," said Hella, "he has a curious capacity for making people do what he wants."

Martin was talking to Hella and eating sandwiches.

"Since I came to Leipsic," he said, "I have changed. Paris made me stop being a foolish youth, but Leipsic! Oh, my God! I have moods here. I find that my temper is bad and I become depressed, most terribly depressed. I have long periods when I fail to know myself. I fail to recognize my actions. Before, there never appeared to be more than one way. And how do I now decide? It is all luck; whichever I like best at the moment I do. I am insecure. I wander. There is nothing to prevent me from doing any mad thing. I step. I take another step, but whether north or south I cannot tell."

"It is change of place," said Hella. She was seated on a sofa before an open fire. He was standing beside the mantelpiece, sticking his first finger into the crevices of an elaborate china group. He went on:

"I was so sure when I was young. Without

thinking, a few years ago, I seduced a respectable girl in a wood."

Hella's eyes intensified.

"I stole a manuscript from under the dead body of a man—a man called Werner."

"Yes," said Hella; "the 'Ways of Water' fellow?"

"I thought well of that man," continued Martin; "he was curious—a dream, not real. It was a queer life in those days! He was my very good friend. How dim the past is! I remember clearly, though, some of his unpalatable remarks to me. He did not praise me. I remember how happy I was to receive my patrimony. It wiped away any sorrow I had for my father. I long to be at home now. My sister Bertha was charming: now she is a house-frau. Of course they were not your kind of folk; we are quite common people. It is all vanished away like steam. I can never recall to you, except in music, the charm of those past days! Have you been to Heidelberg? The beautiful woods and rivers! Surely, I think to myself as I recollect them, Paris and Helen dwelt here!"

"I have had no home for three years," said Hella. "I am independent. I live alone. I am sorry you are unhappy."

"I am not exactly unhappy," said Martin, sitting down with a sigh. He adjusted the crease in his trousers, and then hid his face in his hands.

"Bernard told me to sing to you," said Hella.

"Damn Bernard!" he cried, suddenly crossing his legs and folding his arms across his breast. "You are the only human being I have met for weeks."

"Are we human?"

"That is the point," cried Martin violently, changing his position again; "who is human? what is real? what is false? what are dreams?"

"I am twenty-six," said Hella, without any reason but an intricate chain of thoughts.

"I am nearly twenty-five," answered Martin.

"Bernard and I have been friends," she said, "for years. He is so rational and gentle. He is so sane in his judgments, so human."

"I cannot get familiar or at all at ease with him," said Martin, standing up again. "I am so pleased I have met you; I have a friend in Leipsic! Ah! Leipsic, now thou art more to me than a mere pile of bricks."

"Please come and see me whenever you like," said Hella; "if you like me to-morrow, if I am human."

"I have never met so clever a woman"—Martin bowed—"one so human and—may I say it?—so much my equal."

"Oh!" said Hella, laughing, "I can say the same of you. We are two genuine and private beings."

"Yes," said Martin.

"And you in public are a musical genius, and I a——"

Martin interrupted—" A very beautiful woman."

Hella made eyes at him.

" Good-night, Martin Schüler ; we shall meet again."

" Assuredly, many, many times. Allow me the privilege of a friend." He kissed her hand, and, looking up with a smile, said :

" Hella, next time perhaps you will sing one of my songs to me."

Before she had answered he had kissed her cheek and gone out of the door.

A most delicious feeling came to her. Happiness suffused her mind and body. She half shut her eyes as she stood, bathed in delight. Suddenly she laughed girlishly, and went to the mantelpiece to get a cigarette, but when she found herself standing just where he had stood, she hid her face in her hands and said aloud, " Oh, I am happy, I am hap-py ! Martin, Martin, Martin ! " Then, almost delirious with pure joy, she hastened to her bed in order that darkness might prolong her gladness, and give her her desired dreams.

CHAPTER XII

STEINBACH gave a dinner party some weeks later to his young men friends. His dinner parties were intellectual at the beginning and often rowdy at the end. To this dinner party came Griffenhousen, who knew more about the antiquities of Greece than any man of his years; Paul Reinherz and Maurice von Rittenberg, historic authors, one stout and one Bohemian; an artist, August Falls; another artist, Jensen Christenholm, a Swede, who painted only naked women as they were, not as the general public supposes they are; the sixth was a Russian Pole, who had tabulated human nature during his residence in a Siberian prison, and who, like Dostoieffsky, had returned much the worse in health and morals, to write novels. His novels were bad, though startling. He was always in debt, always unclean and fierce in behaviour, though of a weak and mild appearance. His teeth were far apart, his eyes pale and short-sighted, his hair lank and fair. Martin was amused by him, probably because he was a foreigner, and certainly he said amazing things in an amazing way.

Martin was not in time for dinner. Nobody

waited for him. They seated themselves in Steinbach's modern dining-room round a round table covered with fruit and wine. The Russian began to smoke at once. He was supposed to suffer from epilepsy, but his fits never occurred unless he could gain something by them. He had fits in the drawing-rooms of rich people in order that they might put him to bed and look after him for several days.

"Where is Schüler?" said Reinherz, looking at the empty chair.

"Chez Hella von Rosenthal," said Steinbach.

Somebody made an indecent and obvious remark.

"He is still a rose in the bud," said August Falls, the artist.

"We expected more than we have got," sneered Christenholm, the other artist. "The life of music is short. Music is a spasmodic art. We are all fools if we expect any more musicians for a thousand years."

"Oh, pooh!" cried Rittenberg as he swallowed his *hors d'œuvres* noisily, "don't you tell me that. It is art that is on the wane."

Knives and forks clattered and glasses clinked. Wine was poured out of bottles; everything seemed to be in shimmering movement like sunlit water.

"Steinbach, you got a bad egg when you went to Heidelberg," said somebody.

Steinbach was silent. He did not like being laughed at.

The Russian spoke. "What is everybody saying? My premonitions are wrong, perhaps."

"What premonitions?" everybody cried.

"That I shall have a recurrence of my illness to-night."

"Oh, pooh!" cried Rittenberg, "we shall souse you in the bath if you do."

The noise grew, the plate clattered, voices hummed, buzzed, and shouted. Griffenhousen ate little, Steinbach nothing, the others a great deal. Griffenhousen whispered to Steinbach:

"You have lost Schüler."

"Perhaps," he answered stiffly.

"I suppose von Rosenthal is his mistress."

"Perhaps," said Steinbach stiffly again.

"People talk about them. He kisses her publicly at her soirées."

"I daresay."

"I am sorry for you, Bernard. What a disappointment. He is running to seed, I suppose. We all expected something this March."

"You shall have it in October," Steinbach barked. He was angry and hurt and annoyed with Martin because he had not come to dinner. Martin was hardly ever to be seen nowadays. He took himself off to Hella's house, and the house of rich men who flattered him and treated him like a prince. He spent Steinbach's money, came back drunk now and then, and gambled, rode, and danced his time away.

Then there was Hella. He, Steinbach, had lost

her, but she seemed to have opened the gates of life to Martin. It would have been easy to throw Martin over, and kick him out of the house, but Steinbach was hampered by jealousy, by fear lest somebody else should participate in the success that he himself hoped for; and by love, because he loved Martin and looked upon him as a responsibility.

Doors banged. The door of the dining-room was flung open and Martin, gay and joyous, came into the room.

"Hail, my friends!" he cried. "Cæsar is late!" Then flung himself into a vacant chair. The servant offered him *hors d'œuvres*. "No," he said, "I'll go on with the rest."

"How is Hella?" somebody said.

Martin frowned slightly. "*Hella* is very well," he answered. "Make me a cigarette, Machinkoff!"

Machinkoff made him a cigarette, then stood up and leant across the table, with a slight bow, to hand it. "My friend," he said, in a voice too deep for his exterior, "the immutable truth lived at the bottom of the well." Nobody knew what he meant, but somebody clapped his hands and said, "Well done, Machinkoff."

"What do you mean?" said Martin.

"Next time you are with your girl," answered Machinkoff, "threaten to kill her. Threaten to kill a woman if you care for her mind. If you only care for her body, do the same. It is amusing."

"The lunatic," said Falls.

" I once in fun threatened to kill a girl," said Christenholm ; " she was in her bath ; I spoke through a locked door. She thought I should drown her, so to save herself from being drowned, she killed herself by jumping from the window."

Rittenberg thought no woman's equanimity would stand a threat of death. Griffenhousen said everything was less dear than life to some people, but that others valued many things more. He himself did not care how soon he died.

Machinkoff in a flash produced a revolver, and fired it off in the air. The suggestion caused Griffenhousen to think he had been taken at his word, and he fainted. A commotion took place, but he soon recovered and lived for many years under the shadow of that joke.

Soon order was restored, and choice wines and cigars were spread in the smoking-room, where all the men shortly repaired. The din became deafening until Machinkoff, who hated noise of any kind after his long and silent Siberian sojourn, suggested cards, and no sooner were they all seated at cards than he began to tell the fortunes of the three men at his table from the hands they held. The fortunes were banal enough, but as nobody is proof against the black arts, soon everybody was clamouring for a display of clairvoyance, except Steinbach, who said he believed in God.

" If you will," said Machinkoff, " I must ; but if I have a fit, be it upon your heads."

" Upon our heads be it," cried everybody.

Machinkoff looked from one to the other. He was a little drunk, he was excited, he hardly knew what he said. " All have blank faces," he said.

" Griffenhousen is a fool and of no use in this world. What are the antiquities? We live a little in the present. He is in too much of a hurry to belong to the past."

" Father of heaven ! " he suddenly cried, looking at Martin, about whom he felt a stupid jealousy, but whom he dared not mention first for fear of being accused of charlatanism ; " Jensen Christenholm must beware of himself. He is a low and cruel man. Thy place in hell is hot, Jensen Christenholm ! I see the devil with his tongs nipping the soft parts of your body." He pretended to shiver as if in the first stages of a fit. Christenholm laughed, but he felt the powers of evil run coldly down his spine. When denounced, one's convictions are apt to give way ; even in fun it is uncomfortable to be denounced. The Russian took a drink of brandy, and, becoming more drunk and more excitable, let out a flow of language that was unintelligible even to himself.

" I see," suddenly burst out Machinkoff, " Martin Schüler crucified upon a high tree. ' Unfaithful ! unfaithful ! ' cry the carrion crows as they pluck out his once luminous eyes. Unfaithful ! unfaithful ! His bonds burst, he falls from the tree. He walks. He is full of death. Damned art thou, Martin Schüler, one way and another. I have lived in prisons, I have worked in mines, I have stenched

with filth and degradation, but I have not stenched as Martin Schüler stenches in his death's walk." Machinkoff wrestled with his collar and groaned. " Oh, I am bewildered at the sight of your degradation ! No diamond is true that will not withstand fire. Hark ! Hark ! He howls as the dogs tear him. As he walks, dogs tear him. Is he alive ? Yes ! Dogs tear him. Do you see yourself as you prowl in the night ? What a labour to live. At the top of the hill you will die. How steep the hill is, how barbarous the rocks ! ' Is there no top to this hill,' you cry. At the top you die. You live a little longer after you are dead—a minute perhaps. That minute is everlasting, that is hell. Hell is timeless ; hell has no locality ; for you it is that minute when you are dead on the top of the hill ! "

Machinkoff shuddered and pitched forward. Two of the men caught him, and brandy was poured down his throat. In a minute he spoke. " There," he said, " I almost had a fit," but his eye was steady and cold, he was pleased because he had made a sensation ; he was looking for Martin. Martin and Steinbach had gone. Steinbach was walking in the dining-room ; in a miserable temper. He had gone there at the outbreak of clairvoyance. Martin had just been in to him and had struck his face. Before he had time to retaliate or do anything else Martin was gone.

When Martin arrived at Hella's house it was

after midnight. He let himself in with a key and went to her bedroom. The opening of the door woke her. She saw the outline of a man.

" Who is it ? " she said breathlessly.

" I," said Martin. " I am betrayed ! "

" Who has betrayed you ? "

" Steinbach. Oh, my God, my God ! " he cried ; " I shall kill him. I shall go back and kill him and then myself."

Hella sprang from the bed and ran to him. " Don't, don't ! " she cried. " Oh, Martin, don't ! " She felt his breast heave in fury.

" I must kill that man. I have struck him : I must kill him."

" No, no ! " Hella left him hastily and put on a dressing-gown. Then she led him into the drawing-room. She believed he was drunk.

" My dear," she said, holding his arm as they stood watching the red embers of the fire ; " my dear, do nothing rash."

" Rash ! " howled Martin. " He hired a Russian to insult me ! He cannot goad me into servility with his insults. I shall kill him. Let me but tear up all I have written, let me but get back when they have all gone ! "

" You must tear nothing up—for my sake," said Hella. " Remember you are going to be my husband in May. My husband ! I want my husband and all his works. I love his beautiful works. Oh, dearest Martin, I love you."

" May is not the question now," said Martin ;

" I shall shoot Steinbach." He renounced, however, his last intention to shoot Steinbach as he said it. Hella was crying. How lovely she looked with her hair flowing over her shoulders ! She was good too. She loved Martin perfectly and unselfishly, and an agony filled her heart lest he should do anything outrageous.

" Darling," she said, " you must not kill Bernard."

Martin growled, " You can marry him." The reply, " But he will be shot," sprang to her lips. She almost smiled as she answered instead, " I do not love him."

They still stood in front of the fireplace. Martin's hands were in his pockets. He frowned and puffed out his cheeks.

" I cannot go back to his house."

A huge wave, like a wave of the sea, caught up Hella's spirit and threw it at his feet.

" You can stay here," she said meekly.

" I cannot."

" You come here often," she said, almost bitterly.

" I do," he sighed, but he turned and took her into his arms. "Hella, Hella, my love ! "

She put her arms round his neck and whispered in his ear, " We will go to Switzerland. Up in the mountains you will forget ; just alone, you and I, and you can call me your wife."

" My wife," said Martin, kissing her hand.

" And we will not think of Bernard at all."

" Yes," he said ; " I will shake his dust off the soles of my feet."

CHAPTER XIII

IN those days it was still possible to evade the English in Switzerland, but then one lacked convenient hotels and life was not very comfortable. Martin and Hella wished above everything to avoid people, so they went neither to Davos, Caux, nor St. Moritz. Lunn was beginning to popularize the Bernese Oberland as a winter resort for the English and to import as social attractions, to regions where society had never yet flourished, certain poorer members of the British aristocracy. It was probably a scheme remunerative to Mr. Lunn and to the Swiss, but to Hella and Martin, who wished to discover some place where men and women were few, its results did not appeal. Finally they took a châlet near Les Avants, because Les Avants was small, accessible, and not too high.

There, in a small châlet overlooking the lake of Geneva, they began their life together. All day they wandered in the beautiful clear winter sunshine, or climbed the Col du Lion, or walked down the gorge beside the half-frozen mountain torrent. Below and above their châlet grew immense pines of a description only to be met with in those shaded

mountain valleys, pines from whose boughs the frozen snow continually slipped with a soft swish. In those calm still days of winter sunshine this was the only noise that invaded their peace. How blissful and how idle their life was. Beauty and goodness filled their hearts, they were as pure as the endless snow upon the mountains. Sometimes they walked high upon the hill-side to gaze at the panorama of the Italian mountains, sometines they went even higher amongst the rocks to gain a view of Mont Blanc, remote and blue, like a peak of mist. Before them, wherever they went, stretched the lake and the long Rhone valley, terminating in the beautiful Dent du Midi. Sometimes they took the train down to Vevey and pretended to be frivolous at a tea-shop ; sometimes they ventured on the lake. Hella was never tired of looking at Chillon, she sailed past it, and walked past it, and entered it several times. But there was no snow in Montreux or Vevey, so that in spite of romantic and frivolous attractions they did not very often go down there. They preferred to be high up in the whiteness of the snow, or under the warm shade of the gigantic pines. They read many books together and watched many sunsets. Martin, to the outward eye, was changed. He wrote no music nor did he talk about it except vaguely when Hella opened the subject, which she did not frequently do. He was mild, kind, and happy. The joy of loving well and generously one who was so good and who depended entirely upon him for her

happiness took hold of him. He did all she asked him, went where she wished, sought to please her and to make her as happy as himself. One lovely day succeeded another. Rousseau in his highest idyllic dream, his best idyllic experience, never surpassed the beauty of those winter days. The golden sunshine, the dark green trees, the white snow, the blue lake, entered their hearts. They were one with the beauty of nature. Their thoughts and their conversation were too blissful to tell. They dwelt in heaven. Marvels of existence were revealed to them; they spoke to one another of these revelations. Nothing in the world seemed impossible. The highest and most remote came within their reach. They grasped it, they rode among the stars. At night, in the cold glitter of the moon, they would stand on their veranda wrapped in the same fur cloak, and without speech would enter into one another's souls. Not a moment of the day or night were they apart. Their familiarity became complete. Short, happy days, and long, rapturous nights glided past—a never-ending day, a never-ending night. The depths of their souls were disclosed, their minds were awakened to their own deepness, the profundity of human nature, the magnitude of human love.

They met in that oblivion where the human soul becomes utterly lost in one perfect light made of the essence of oneness, made of the perfection of thought, and of the perfection of physical tension, when every nerve of the body is alive and perfectly

controlled. They knew the complete self-consciousness of the body when it meets the body in no ugly frenzy of inequality but in the loveliness of the purest free-will and the passionless beauty of restraint. The delicate and most wonderful contacts of supreme love: beautiful and strong finger-touches, the light caresses, the meeting of lips and length of limb: give wings to the soul, upon which it flies a million miles above the stars, so that they look below like silver streaks in space. The soul poises a little while looking downwards; it cannot look up, it is supreme; it looks sideways and around for it knows that this instant of time will never return except in memory. It shines white like pure light and suddenly bursts into a million silvery sparks that shower and scatter and flow forth like the fountains of the day. An instant, and then darkness falls over space, and with sighs the body loses itself in the body and the lips join in one unutterable annihilation, and time, pain, and consciousness, restraint, beauty, and attainment, life, desire, passion, and supremacy fade into the deepness of the wonderful and silent night.

When the snow began to melt and to lay bare great green patches on the hillside, they gathered hepatica and crocuses together, primsoses and white and purple violets. The saturated fields were full of flowers. They wandered down the slopes through little woods and crawled under bushes for the hepatica; "fille avant la mére" it is called because the mauve flowers appear long

before the leaves. No day passed during the spring thaw without a walk. They walked chiefly in the gorge, and Martin, intrepid and bold, waded out of sheer lightness of heart across the widest part of the torrent with Hella in his arms. Their ecstatic happiness seemed not to wane; neither of them could surfeit of love-making and kissing. Every time they kissed was a new love. In the woods sometimes they would suddenly kiss, and a blind oneness would possess them for a moment. Sometimes they denied themselves an embrace till their hearts cried out to meet. They found a thousand expressions of their love. When the clouds rolled below them, close upon the lake, they had the sensation of being in that material heaven so dear to man's imagination. When they descended through the fir trees down into the valley they had the sensation of sinking into the oblivion of love. When they stood high upon the hills in the wind of early spring, they felt young and strong. Courage, weariness, hope, sadness, aspiration, wonder, fear, thankfulness: none of these things did they experience. In their bliss was nothing but gladness, certainty, and attainment.

CHAPTER XIV

MARCH became April, and April May, and Martin Schüler went to Interlaken with Hella von Rosenthal. They had heard nothing from Steinbach, though Martin, in a moment of good feeling towards humanity, had written an apology to him.

In those days, behind the Hotel du Nord was a field full of flowers : forget-me-nots, primroses, and daisies ; fuller of flowers than any other field in the world. It was away from the main road, beside an old monastery church, the vaults of which were used as a beer cellar. Here in the early part of summer, before visitors infested Interlaken, one could pass whole days and see nobody but an occasional peasant. Hella called it the Champs Élysées, for she and Martin frequently sat there together and talked and wrote poetry and passed idyllic days. When they were tired of the sight of the Jungfrau and the Scheidech and the well-wooded foothills of the Oberland, they sat beneath the shadow of the huge walnut trees that grew beside the church. The ancient trees and the old church were, in quality and colour, like those old trees and churches which one sees in landscape

pictures of the late eighteenth century. There was repose beneath them, and a feeling of rural domesticity. Here village revels were held in former times, and solemn Calvinistic ceremonies performed. Here children sometimes played while their mothers gossiped and made lace. Hans Andersen probably saw Rudi's prototype kiss a village girl in the secluded shadows of the church walls; probably Byron had lolled upon these grasses, dressed fantastically in peasant costume, handsome and emotional, lazy and energetic. The ancient quality of that shady place brought peace and the quiet things of love closer to Hella. She enjoyed the placid calmness of her love there as one enjoys the serenity of a lake after the turmoil of the ocean.

In the warm afternoon, when she and Martin sat together there, the proprietor of the Hotel du Nord, their host, used to watch them through a gap in the hedge that gave access to this field. He was a fat Swiss, and habitually wore a grey suit and a small straw hat. He used to wonder how Herr and Madame von Schüler could lie for such hours in a common field instead of commandeering his carriages for endless expeditions. He spent a long time in that gap wondering who the von Schülers were, and excused his idleness by pretending to scare birds off his grass-seed patch. People did not usually come to his small hotel so early. When the first visitor came the seed grass was usually cut, his wife had usually been replaced

by a chef, and his son by a few waiters more awake to their work.

On the tenth of May Martin received a parcel from Steinbach with a short, business-like letter asking him kindly to go through the contents and to make what alterations he liked. Martin did as he was asked and then thrust the parcel into his portmanteau.

One hot morning, as he and Hella lay in their field, Hella sighed and said, "I could live and die in this field!" She lay on her stomach underneath a blue parasol. "I love these forget-me-nots and I love you." Then she whispered, "Forget-*me*-not, forget-*me*-not!" and ran her hands through the grass and flowers as if they were the hair of the earth's head. "Haven't we been happy here?" She picked all the forget-me-nots in her reach. "I never want to go back to Leipsic."

"I should like to go to Lauterbrunnen again," said Martin; "I want to see old Staubach once more."

"You old tourist," smiled Hella.

"You can stay here for ever," said Martin, "if you like."

"It is not nice in summer, I know by experience! If we could only keep the weather, and the wistaria, and the emptiness, and this flowery field!"

"Hella," said Martin, "I love you inexpressibly." They looked into each other's eyes for a moment.

Then Martin said, "Hella!"

"Yes."

"Steinbach has sent me my opera comedy finished."

"What? that comedy!"

"Yes; I am amazed. It is wonderfully amalgamated; he must have rifled my desk. All the best parts I ever made for it and a multitude of harmonies and odd tunes are incorporated. Two songs need alteration. I did not think such a thing was possible. It is very good. Do you object if I ask him to come down here for a week?"

"Oh," cried Hella, "do not let us spoil this with him! I would rather go back: either idea is hateful. Martin!"

"I am afraid I must see him," said Martin; "I have the fever. I did not realize that I had done such brilliant works of art." He laughed. "It is really a very nice comedy; the waltzes and songs are charming. Steinbach will have it played for me on the first of June, my twenty-fifth birthday. He is an admirable ass. The book is good, too."

Hella's heart sank into the bottomless pit. "Oh!" she said, "this was too lovely to last. Martin, I want the impossible."

"What, dear love?" said Martin, rolling under the parasol.

She stuck pink forget-me-nots in his moustache. His moustache was too short to hold flowers. They fell out as he kissed her hands.

"I want to be alone with you always," she said.

"We will always be happy," said Martin; "we will get a house in Leipsic."

"It will be funny to return," said Hella; "I am not what I was when I left it; how much happier, a thousand times happier! Do you know I am a bad woman?"

"What?" said Martin, kissing her ear.

"A bad woman," cried Hella, laughing and pushing his face away because his breath tickled her.

"You have been faithful to me," said Martin.

She put her head down on the grass and looked sideways at his face, which was close to her own.

"I am so happy," she said, "I have gone to the devil. Darling, you can throw me off absolutely any minute."

"So I can," said Martin.

Hella had never discussed their relationship before; they had both taken it for granted. Now she did so with a beating heart and a pleasant feeling of daring.

"I am your mistress," she said.

Martin put his hand over her mouth. His unconventionality was almost shocked. "Lawful observances are nothing to me," he said; "if I ceased to love you I should leave you in any case. Tell me, who is in the happier position, a wife who has divorced her husband, or a deserted mistress? Both are free in either case."

"Do not talk about it any more," said Hella.

"No," said Martin. "It is too hot here; my legs are burnt. The sun makes me sweat."

"I like it," said Hella; "I like being very hot It will make me thin."

"You are thin enough. I forbid you to alter. I should have to learn you again—you, whom I know perfectly."

Hella kissed him under the parasol.

It was very hot, and high noon, so presently they went and sat under the walnut trees. Blue shadows and white sunshine chequered the grass upon which they sat.

"I have been idle," said Martin.

"I have been happy," said Hella. She felt as if this moment were the end of something precious, as if it were a moment placid to the mind, yet, to the deeper consciousness, one of grave importance, like the day when war becomes inevitable, or when death begins to set in—a day without apparent significance. Her deeper consciousness said "Farewell," and put in the irrevocable past a season that to her would make her life worth having been lived. Although she knew that her natural attitude was gone, and that every day would now be wasted in an endeavour to make the most of it, when Martin said, "I think I shall go back to-morrow," she begged for another week of happiness.

"I must go to-morrow," he decided, and got up. His determination was stubborn once he had made up his mind. "We will go to see old Staubach once more this afternoon. I want to depart with that sound in my ears."

Hella would have preferred to sail once more upon Lake Thun. She had a passionate love of

sailing upon still water. She did not say so to Martin, but she was conscious of being opposed to one who for months had been as herself. They went into the hotel for lunch.

They stood near the waterfall and got splashed, and were amazed at the height from which it fell. The rainbows in the spray brought back to Hella that feeling of hope which had been so long unnecessary to her. At the end of its fall the water was as light and diffused as rain. The light breeze blew it about as if it were the end of a long veil. Martin would not go far away from it as long as they were in Lauterbrunnen. It had a fascination for him. They spent the afternoon upon the grass slopes near it, and picked gentian because they were as blue as Hella's eyes and as the sea which Martin had never seen. Hella was horrified to hear he had never seen the sea. He reminded her of his mediæval youth and the lack of imagination of his parents. "Several people in Heidelberg have never seen the sea," he said; "we do not go to Ostend for our holidays like the Colognese."

"You must go with me to Norway," said Hella, "and hear the sea roar amongst the rocks. It seems incredible never to have seen the sea. You have never seen anything really flat, nor anything larger that your eye can look at, nor anything deep; Oh, Martin, the sea! You would love me there! I can hear the waves thunder over the rocks, surging upwards and then sinking back with a rushing

sound and a rattling of thousands of pebbles. Oh, it is so endless and eternal!—Martin, you must go to the sea! How circumscribed this valley is! Like a crevice among rocks. You must see the motion and continual heaving of the sea. The only thing I know of like the sea is the Hungarian plain, but it is still. I must take you to the blue, calm Italian sea, too, where distant land is visible, and islands. You must stand on an island."

"Perhaps I will go some day," said Martin, who knew without having beheld it—because he was descended of man—the whole nature of the sea. It had probably a greater significance for him because he had never seen it; things unseen are often most wonderful to us. "But people," he added, "have exclaimed on beholding the sea for the first time, 'How tame!' on beholding mountains, 'How low!' on seeing foreign countries, thrilling to their imaginations, 'How dull!'"

Martin looked up at the Jungfrau. "There is my test of imagination," he said. The glittering blue ice of the glacier sparkled in the sun; the whiteness of the mountain peak rose wreathed in light clouds into a superb blue sky. "The sea cannot be more beautiful."

"I would like to go to the South Pole," said Hella. Captain Scott had just returned from one of his expeditions.

"You would like the world to be smooth," laughed Martin.

"Yes," said Hella, "I like expanse."

"There we differ," said Martin, whose love for her was cool that afternoon. "I prefer uprightness and deep-downwardness unfilled by flat earth and water. I rejoice in the confines of this narrow valley. Wonderfullest of all valleys! I like the perpendicular waterfalls and the menace of overhanging cliffs. Give me precipices and high mountains, give me a gazing upwards and downwards, give me gorges, give me passes! To me the Iron Gate is the symbol of imagination, the sheer ascent of the Jungfrau the symbol of aspiration, the blueness of moonlit white peaks the symbol of fineness, the piled-up mountains grandeur!—Mont Blanc, Chimborazo, Everest, the earth's attainment." He smiled at Hella. "You are a quiet woman and a singular woman. Your passions are wide and deep and, I should say, everlasting. Mine rear themselves towards the sky. You and I are the mountain and the plain; on you I raise myself, I am nearer the stars. O low-lying plain, your constancy, not your poetry, is your beauty." He pretended that he was teasing her, but he was not.

When the afternoon drew to a close they went to have tea in a cherry orchard full of white blossom. They bought wooden swallows and carved spoons from a brown little Swiss boy, and coarse, narrow lace from a little brown girl with her hair in pigtails.

"Shall we ever have a little boy and girl?" said Martin, patting the little girl's head.

"With the grace of God and the mercy of our Lady," said the infant.

"Yes," said Hella, "when we are married. I will not inflict illegitimacy upon children."

Their last day in Switzerland was like the last day of any long honeymoon—the beginning of that time when adaptation sets in. Martin had none of the domestic qualities. Hella might elevate herself on to a pedestal sufficiently high for his worship, she might become his slave, she might become his mother, and, putting aside all jealousy, guard his selfishness with devoted care. One could not tell what Hella would do. She might continue passionately to love him and refuse his secondary love, for it was as improbable as a dream that his passion for her would endure, that his inconstancy should for her become constancy.

They returned to Interlaken by the half-past six train, which brought them to the station at eight. The evening was so beautiful that Martin, who found in woods a secret of inspiration, suggested that they should walk home by the Heimweh Fluh.

When they were deep in the woods Hella said, "Our last stroll! Kiss me, Martin." Her emotion was very deep.

Martin kissed her and said, "I told you I once seduced a girl in a wood?"

"Yes, do not remind me of that now,' said Hella, with tears in her eyes; "kiss me now—kiss

me, only me; tell me I am all you love in the world."

"You are all I love in the world," said Martin, and his thoughts flew to his opera comedy.

"What are you thinking of?" said Hella; "I saw your thoughts fly to something."

Martin answered candidly. "I was thinking how my opera would sound on an orchestra."

"Oh!" cried Hella, sadly, "not of me."

"Of you all the while; I always think of you."

They sauntered along through the woods in silence, until Hella suddenly said, "Martin!"

They stopped under the gloomy trees.

Hella looked at Martin and cried all of a sudden, "I do not know how to keep you! I am a child. There is nothing to compare with you in all the world."

Martin took her in his arms; his heart suddenly swelled with great feelings. "My lovely one," he said.

"How gentle you are," whispered Hella. "How gentle! I adore you."

She rested against him peacefully. He kissed her passionately as he knew she liked to be kissed, then picked her up in his arms.

"In my power!" he said.

"Utterly!" she sighed; "so beautiful!"

He carried her some distance in his arms, and she either swooned or slept. In the dim light he could discern that her eyes were shut and feel her soft regular breath.

"If I left her," he thought, "what would she do!" A kaleodiscopic vision of her grief ran before him. He stood holding her for a moment, and said softly, "I do love you, Hella, better than my life."

For a moment he stood upon a pinnacle of goodness, and then her weight impressed itself upon his arms and he gently put her on the ground. She awoke and murmured, "Lovely, lovely! we do love."

"I am your slave," he said, sitting at her feet; then he in turn succumbed to love, and kissed and embraced her passionately.

They sat together in the deep shade, bewildered. Their love reunited them after the gentle estrangement of the day. As if for the last time love made a final and supreme expression of itself in them. The beneficence of the past day floated up from around them, the pines exhaled an aromatic perfume upon them, the white, dew-laden winds from the lake blew softly past them. Small and still and silent they sat among the vast mountains, indistinguishable among the dark trees; little beings in the grandeur of nature. The mountains and the valleys, the hills and forests, turned with the turning earth further and further away from the sun, but to Hella and Martin it seemed as if the world stood still, as if the peaceful darkness hid them in the eternity of death with their immortal and transcending passion of love.

CHAPTER XV

ON June 1st an orchestral rehearsal of "The Coquettes" was held in the Neues Theater of Leipsic. As Hella, Martin, and Steinbach drove together in an open cab across the Rossplatz, the two men seemed perfectly reconciled. Hella was delighted with both of them. It was with the greatest difficulty that she had persuaded Martin to ride in the cab with Steinbach. Even as it was he had endeavoured to be so late that Steinbach would have driven off without him. Steinbach was prepared to wait till doomsday. He had gracefully acquiesced in Martin's relationship with Hella. All that a man could do he had done; he had yielded everything in order to gain his end; but the prospect, now that his end was in view, gave him no pleasure. His happiness seemed to have been twisted back to front; he felt entirely the wrong way on. His determination, and his subordination of all human considerations, had enabled him by a judicious selection of helpers to complete the work of another man. A chosen path to him was the path of his life, he permitted himself no change; in fact, change to him was impossible. The opera was about to be launched

upon the world. It was an achievement of lightness. Steinbach's share in its construction had been arduous. Although he knew that his labours had been successful, he was disappointed; he was disappointed because Martin was not his friend, because he had behaved badly to him and had not kept his compact of co-operation. Disgusted, but determined to bring the episode to a satisfactory close, he had prepared everything for the final obsequies, as it were. He spared no expense. In the New Theatre, towards which they were driving, were collected together the persons who were to be asked to produce it. Steinbach drew out his watch with a familiar movement as they passed the Museum.

"Just so," he said; "we are half an hour late."

He looked up towards the pseudo-renaissance elevation of the theatre. "At last," he thought, "I have got this horse to the water. In a minute I'll make him drink."

Hella was excited. She sat beside Martin in a brand new dress of blue crêpe de Chine and blue silk braid-lace. It fitted tightly round her figure, but at the hem flowed out into a shower of accordion-pleated chiffon frills. The bell sleeves hung gracefully over her hands, the collar rose to her very ears. Upon her head she wore a large blue hat of fine straw, shaped like a dish, which projected over her face but was cut away almost like a Salvation Army bonnet at the back. Chiffon

strings secured it under her chin. At her waist she had a bunch of pink carnations to match the one pink flower in her hat. Her face was slightly flushed and she looked very pretty. As they drove up to the theatre she slipped her hand into Martin's and gave his a squeeze.

Martin was in a bad temper. He had manufactured a quarrel with Hella, one of their many recent quarrels. They were all of his doing; she was as patient as a lamb with him. She had not kissed him properly that morning, he said, or something equally stupid. He was angry because he had been forced to ride in a cab with Steinbach. He felt full of ill-will towards everybody. Now it was beginning to rain too, and he was quite sick of the name of his opera. Why he had ever shown a moment's interest in it he could not say. Now he was forced to attend this performance. Why should he? There was really no law passed to make him. It was only an orchestral rehearsal. No use. If Steinbach cared to waste his money, let him. After all, it was too much trouble to get out of the cab and make a fuss now. He decided, in spite of the waste of time, to go through with it.

The performance was concluded. The conductor turned and bowed to Martin and he felt pleased. Soon the financiers, managers, and directors adjourned from the grand circle to a box where they could talk freely. When Martin found himself an object of no notice in the middle of the dress-circle,

in the centre of buzzing and stupid friends, he was cross. He thought he was being slighted. He got up and hurried round to the box. Hella followed him. He flung the door open and said in a loud voice, " May I say a word ? I consider the opera too bad to produce. I intend to re-write it."

Makintire, the broker, shrugged his shoulders and let his arms fall to his sides.

" You fool, Schüler ! " said Steinbach ; " you fool ! " His obstinate patience had given out.

The director said, " I cannot undertake to produce it if it is rewritten. It has a very probable chance of some success as it stands."

" Don't be foolish, Martin," whispered Hella ; " don't be foolish."

Makintire came towards him. " Herr Schüler," he said, " reconsider what you have said. Surely so fine a money-making production ought not to be lost. It is worth a great deal of marks to my pocket even." Martin's conduct had made up everybody's minds that the desirable thing to do was to have the opera produced. Steinbach was tense. His father, who was there to countenance his son with the brokers, began to be silly and persuasive. Ancient Rosenbaum, Makintire's decrepit partner, was making totally useless and elaborate calculations. The manager of the theatre kept his eyes on the director, and the director—grandiose, young-middle-aged and essentially Prussian—was smiling to himself, and thinking what a

fine young woman Hella was. He was calmly awaiting the moment when all the disturbances should have been settled. Then he would give his vote whichever way he chose. Having spent several years in the army and retired a colonel, he was quite satisfied with his superiority over mankind. Hella was just behind Martin. Pride rose in Martin. He wanted to exert himself like Samson. He wanted to kick everybody over the edge of the box into the stalls. He wanted to escape and write a grand grand-opera. Hella was behind him. One cannot brave out the foe at one's back. Her hand touched his back. He wavered. It was his birthday. He remembered his bearishness of the morning. His birthday kisses had fallen flat. He had meant to enjoy to-day, but he had not. He thought his love for Hella must be going off, which was true. Suddenly it seemed that everybody was asking for something Why not give? He began to be flattered by the obvious attitude of petitioning that every one seemed to be adopting towards him. He began to think he might enjoy the success of this affair. Hella touched him again in a vital spot. He did not at once see how to give in. Then the brilliant notions of gallantry, reconciliation, and triumphant climbing down all occurred to him simultaneously.

"What do you wish," he said, turning round, "Hella von Schüler?"

Hella had never been called this before. Old Steinbach winked at the director as being the

most jocose man present, but every one else's eyes were turned on Hella.

Hella was not prepared for any such dénouement. She blushed deeply.

" Oh, I should like it to be done," she said, " if Herr Schüler wants it."

Bernard Steinbach was shaking her by the hand, the director was murmuring some compliment, some one was clapping his hands and saying " Brava ! "

Thus the tedious affair came to be settled.

They drove away from the theatre in the late afternoon in a shut cab, for the rain was pouring down. Martin and Hella were alone together.

" Ah ! well," said Martin, looking with fixed eyes across the grey spaces of the Augustplatz, " my first public step is made." Hella felt sad ; she seemed to see some unhappy thoughts in his face. She sat closer to him.

" Forgive me," she said, " for being naughty to you this morning. I won't ever answer back again. Be happy on your birthday."

" All days are alike," said Martin. " What a dreary occasion that was."

" But I love you."

He put an arm round her.

" I try to think," he said, " that love is the great compensation, but it is as hard work as anything else and does not make anything easier."

BERLIN

BERLIN

CHAPTER XVI

THE Countess von Ardstein was an extremely ugly woman. Although she was barely fifty years of age her skin was dry and wrinkled and her hair was grey. It is said that once she had been very handsome, but now her teeth were long and wide apart and almost as brown as her skin. She was as thin as a lath, and her hands, covered with brown skin in which a multitude of little dried veins showed, were like the claws of an old witch. She was altogether like an old female necromancer escaped into society. She could read Latin and Greek, and had a passion for money, music, art, and household economy. Her costly clothes were horrible. She always wore fur somewhere about her person, and a touch of either emerald green or turquoise blue. These were her favourite colours. In the daytime she perched high hats, bedecked with ostrich feathers, upon her hair, and decorated herself with bags, reticules, châtelaines, umbrellas, parasols, and boas. At night she always wore *décolleté*, which she adored, although her figure was such that only with great

difficulty did she evade slipping out of her clothes, the contours of which were constructed by dressmakers out of buckram. Her evening dresses were always so much too large for her that it was quite possible for her to turn round inside them.

" Ah, mais non," a French attaché, who was sitting opposite to her once remarked to his dinner companion, " les épaules s'addressent vers le monsieur à droite, mais le buste vers moi."

Had she not existed before the eyes of her friends they would have credited her only as one of those exaggerated impressions of clever women given on the stage. To those who knew her she seemed quite natural, for her eyes were undimmed and beautiful, and her voice pleasant, though given to uttering quick and often sarcastic phrases. There was nobody more generally popular in Berlin; she continued throughout her life to make new friends and rarely lost her old ones. The directness and force of her personality commanded attention, her assurance commanded respect; she had also the gifts of wit, success, and sympathy, and that peculiar ability which often coincides with neither beauty nor wealth, of attracting and subjecting any male being she chose. She had political influence and took care that it should increase. Just a little below her as she rose in power her husband ascended like the basket of a balloon, but he thought, as every basket under every balloon thinks, " How magnificently I rise." It was a great satisfaction to her to give advice upon the

situation between Essen and Berlin, to dabble in the corn question, and even to soil her fingers in the muddy waters of interministerial affairs. She never made the mistake of discussing politics, and never gave any opinion on political matters unless she was asked for it, but she was often asked. Her other opinions she poured out gratuitously and occasionally rather ferociously. Her favourite ideas were those connected with economy and the sexes.

Upon a particular evening she gave a music party at her Berlin palace in order to encourage society to admire a young man whom she had recently discovered at Leipsic and brought to Berlin, and whom she determined to exhibit after sending him to the best tailor and flattering him into the best humour. The " Ardstein Genius," as Martin von Schüler found himself called, had delivered himself over entirely into her hands; she managed his affairs for him, engaged him a secretary, lodged him at her house, and built him at his expense an art villa in the Black Forest, upon the shores of a small lake. Although he allowed the Countess to order his life, Martin felt free again. His successful light opera, " The Coquettes," had given him money and introduced him to the world. His second opera, " The Saddest Singer," had been a wild success both at Leipsic and in Berlin. It was the essence of light-hearted gaiety and love. He had grown up upon it and come to think himself one of the men of the day.

He had no friend, nor did he want one; friends were a dependency and a clog; what he wished for were friendly acquaintances towards whom he need have no obligations. Above all things his freedom was most precious to him; he required nobody who would at all deprive him of it. He did not desire to enter again the dark forest of passion, nor to have again the experience of cutting himself loose from an octopus, for it was thus that the escape from an unequal love presented itself to him.

The music party was held in the gilt and blue reception-room of the Ardstein's large residence; cupids sported among the clouds and plaster-work of the high ceiling, from which descended chandeliers sparkling with a thousand drops of glass that looked like fountains arrested in their play by a magic wand. Above the doors and in the alcoves cupids danced among tambourines, harps, flutes, French horns, and kettledrums heaped upon rolling clouds entwined with ribbons, as if the angels had created there a dust-heap of musical instruments in favour of the more modern gramophone and player-piano. Martin Schüler, who had never appreciated any form of decoration more lovely than the interior of an opera house, felt at home in this music-room with the exquisitely coloured and appropriate, if rather foolish, French mural decorations. The long mirrors above the consols, the ormolu clock and tables, the looped blue damask curtains, gave him great pleasure. There was nothing he liked so much in nature as

the blue sky and the setting sun and flowers, or in art so much as the pretty, the tastefully gaudy, and the voluptuous.

The Countess wafted about among her friends like a witch on a broomstick. She did not believe in crowded parties. To-night she had caused to be written on the programmes, " As a friend with a friend," for she decided that it would be better for Martin to meet her acquaintances in a beam of intimate sunshine. Accordingly there were scarcely more than thirty people present to hear Polinski, who was the only performer of the evening, play. Amongst them was Baron von Hirchner, the Minister of Finance, a broad man of forty-five, at least six foot three inches in height. His wife Beda was there also, but not with him : she was fifteen years his junior and preferred men of her own age, such as Konstanz, the caricaturist, who sat with her now in an alcove. Hirchner himself was fonder of Countess von Ardstein than of anybody. They knew each other's secret lives. His tender emotions, however, belonged to Countess Sophie von Sebaltz, who was the most beautiful young married woman in Berlin. She had been married four years, ever since she was eighteen, and was the wife of a noble whom she had endowed with sufficient wealth to allow him the pleasures of the lion-chase in Africa. She got as much sport out of her life as he did, and infinitely more joy. Her beautiful clothes were the desire of everybody ; to-night she was wearing a long pale satin dress of

a thin silhouette, made without a single ornament, with a trailing cape of blue satin falling from one shoulder upon the floor. She had a string of pearls round her neck and pearls in her ears. She might have lived in any land at any time. Her dark hair and eyes gave her a Spanish look, her mouth was a little Victorian, her chin was decided and Teutonic, her skin also had the immobile pallor of Central Europe, it was of the palest cream. Her cheeks blushed with the pink of roses and her ears were like those pale, nail-pink shells common upon the seashore. Her brows, her arms, her figure were lovelier than those of any princess. Her hands were like a china shepherdess's and her feet beautiful and correctly proportioned. She had all those attributes so long associated with the fairest heroines, and if at times she emphasized her not quite perfect mouth by dressing in frilled mid-Victorian garments, she could, nevertheless, always be the loveliest creature in Germany, the queen of all young hearts in society.

Polinski wandered about among the guests as a guest. The Countess von Ardstein had had to pay for it. His hands flapped from pocket to pocket of his suit. He had always lost something, his handkerchief principally. He had a diamond ring on his little finger. Anyone could see that his life had been spent in his hands. They might have been called intensely beautiful; they appeared to be heavy, loaded, so that all his movements culminated in them instead of in his brain.

If possible he never shook hands with anybody; he let his hands fall heavily into the folds of his fine brown cloth suit when he met an acquaintance and bowed. Sometimes he put his hands under women's when he bent to kiss their fingers, and they conjured up a whole series of sensations, chiefly due to romance in their hearts. His face was wrinkled, with young eyes and young hair. A moustache of fine hairs seemed to have settled like dew on his upper lip and just above his chin. He walked about with an air of sweetness and, perhaps, of slight insipidity.

Martin walked about also; he was the other hero—the Countess's hero. He was aware of it, and deliberately acted contrarily to Polinski. He was a man of the smart world to himself, not an old virtuoso. His pince-nez gave him the look of a Viennese officer, but he was not as well corseted nor as slim as those persons generally are. He smiled and bowed with great dignity to the charming people in the room, and raised himself in his conceit above everybody there. The Countess gambolled round him and ran after him, introducing him to everybody, impressing upon him the advantages of speaking to Hirchner and Sophie, to Konstanz in the second place, and one or two duller people in the higher rank of society. Martin had extraordinarily well caught the air of superiority that acknowledges the courtesies of human beings, but abstracts itself in a moment to better thoughts without waste of time.

Polinski went to the piano and seated himself at it, and the assembly grouped itself in a semi-circle, with Martin Schüler and Countess Sophie in its midst, as if they were the king and queen in a cinematograph play. The people were small for the size of the room, which was lofty and wide enough for a ballroom. They looked like a group of moths and butterflies upon a gilt branch with golden thorns and blue silk leaves. Suddenly Polinski smiled across the space at Martin and made him feel uncomfortable by playing out a phrase of Chopin's Ballade, Ta-*ti*, Ta-*ti*, ta-*ti*, ta-ti-ti-ti, as if he were making a joke at his expense.

Everybody laughed, except Hirchner, who was leaning upon the back of Martin's chair in order to be able to see what might happen between him and Sophie, for it seemed at once obvious that they would attract one another. Hirchner was prepared to make a flight into flower-sown skies upon the wings of good music, because he adored music more than anything else in the world, and had a passionate Teutonic love for soul-stirrings and nervous excitements.

Polinski improvised upon an arpeggio and resolved through a dozen modulations into a series of the preludes and fugues of Bach. Hirchner's mind was captured by the antiphonous beauty of the well-created sound. Martin forced himself to realize what he heard. His animal nature died in him, he ceased to be physical, his intellect gave itself to the succession of phrases. From the animal

he rose to the human, from the human to the intellectual, from the intellectual to the absolute. Sophie von Sebaltz, whose mind was that of an educated woman of the world, thought that Polinski seemed a very long way off, so she spent her time examining Martin, whose breathings she could hear, and looking at the large, unconscious Hirchner who swooned with languorous and exquisite enthusiasms as phrase fell into phrase. She saw Beda Hirchner also carried away by the music and understood why she had married Hirchner. Konstanz also was smoking like a quiet chimney at sunset, having his thoughts recalled to him probably, for in some music only rouses the pleasant memories. When Sophie had looked at all the thirty men and women in the room, she returned to the consideration of Martin, whom the rhythmic ecstasy of the music was filling with joy and peace. In that moment he was again young, lovely, and good. Goodness is a thing not understood except by those who understand Plato, Bach, and Martin Schüler. He lost himself in regions where the Prince Errant of fairy-tales seeks living water, and was amazed to remember that there is something more exquisite than love or passion. He knew that Bach had attained the highest human possibility by creating the uncontroversial. He suffered one of those outgoings uncommon to the human soul, and was aware that he went beyond the outgoing of Polinski or any man in the room. As for women, they are only sighe.s after departure ; they

yearn for the impossible voyages that they only accomplish during periods of motherhood. He became perfectly gay. The beauty of the earth passed before his eyes, and he gave himself up to the quiet of strifeless sound where there is no climax but only a state of beauty. His heart was soothed as if with the rippling of wind over a still pond.

Suddenly, with a brilliance of execution rarely heard, Polinski, as if ashamed of disclosing his soul by his Bach playing, burst into a Hungarian rhapsody. The nerves of the listeners quivered exquisitely as the rhapsody vibrated through the room. The rhythmic rush, the barbaric insistence, the tremulous accuracy, scintillated like a cloud of dancing sequins. The hearts of the hearers were lifted to a point of attention like the hearts of spectators in a race. Their ears were opened to the delicious translucency of a myriad of little waves of sound that followed one another with quivering, shivering movements.

It came to an end. Beethoven's sonata, commonly called the "Waldstein," next gave them an unutterable yearning, and tears stood in their eyes.

"Ah!" they thought, without expressing themselves save by occasional sighs, "how I could rise from the ground in long leaps, how I could overcome the waves with long strokes of swimming, how I could glide low over the breasts of hills on invisible wings." Hirchner looked towards Sophie and thought that he might try to resuscitate the

few sentiments they had shared together, and his breath stirred her hair. Martin got up, and, leaving his friends, began to walk about the room in god-like attitudes. His heart expanded, his throat grew dry. Beethoven always had a physical effect upon him. He seemed to recognize for an instant something he had felt before.

"Bethoven was a sensualist," somebody said.

"Beethoven was impassioned," somebody else said.

The long sonata of variations was given with the last movement in cumulative form that shook the air and caused the chandeliers to rattle. Nobody was very interested in it; they were endeavouring to catch again the sensations the "Waldstein" had produced in them, then they were irritated because it was not repeated. "The best music is the music that appeals to men over and over again," thought Martin to himself as he recognized the notes streaming from the piano. He began to dream again. Polinski's exquisite sense was something worthy of his admiration, and he admired it with all his soul. He desired to be played to endlessly.

A group of arias was performed, and from this agglomeration of Bach, Wagner, Rubinstein, Martin Schüler, and God knows whom, Martin received an idea which he remembered several years later. A Tschaikovski waltz, a romance by some obscurity and Debussy's "Soirée en Granade" were so delightfully represented that everybody began to dream of the happy portions of their youth;

and, after that, Chopin's alluring, worn-out, played out, sensuous ballade in E flat that Polinski had hinted at earlier in the evening made them laugh and wink at one another and throw back their heads with their tongues in their cheeks in order to appreciate some gay and daring memory. At the end of it they broke into such violent applause that it had to be played again.

"Aubrey Beardsley illustrated it," somebody said.

"Ah, but badly!" cried Countess von Ardstein.

"Yes," everybody assented, "he did not get the feeling."

Martin, who knew nothing about Beardsley, was amused to see how this light composition set everybody gay and chattering.

"Chopin was a genius," he thought; but by this time Polinski was playing one of Martin's own songs. He pronounced the subtle harmonies with distinction, and phrased the aria more nearly after the manner of Martin's dream of it than was common. Martin was delighted. He thought how well he compared with everybody else, but forgot to remember that Chopin had just preceded him. His technique, played by a master hand, was pure and finished; there was no poverty or weakness of quality. He was a musician of a high water, even when compared with the classics and semi-classics of other days. Polinski ceased in the middle, and said, "The composer is the body, I am the spirit," and then continued to the end of the song.

Everybody became very enthusiastic; Martin found himself embraced by Polinski, and his hands shaken by several other people. Polinski had had a success, and was, besides, generous natured. "My friend," he said, with tears of enthusiasm and exhaustion in his eyes, "I have shown you where you stand amongst the immortals, and you will rise; I prophecy that you will rise to the presidency of Parnassus. Oh, my friend! you have very wonderful gifts." He let two or three tears run down his face.

"My gifts are nothing to yours," answered Martin, who was deeply moved.

"Ah! do not blaspheme," said Polinski, openly weeping; "do not blaspheme. Your harmony! Your delicious abandon! You waste yourself on the common public—no, you are generous—you diffuse yourself so that the lowest rejoices when it hears you. It has not been my honour to salute so great a man since I kissed the hand of my dead master, Brahms!" and he kissed Martin on both cheeks and left the room.

The soirée ended.

"I like Polinski," said Martin afterwards to the Countess.

"Well," said the Countess, "I am not surprised."

But he liked Polinski not only because he flattered him but because he was a musician and sought after, and Martin added snobbishness to his other vices.

CHAPTER XVII

NOT long after this musical affair, Countess von Ardstein gave a week-end party at her country house, to which she invited those persons whom Martin von Schüler chose out of her acquaintance : Sophie von Sebaltz, Hirchner, Konstanz, Lottie Bischoffheim, and one or two other people. A great deal of riding and shooting took place. Sophie brought her piebald half-arab. She dressed herself to match it in a black coat and white breeches ; in her riding gear one would have said she was on the stage. Martin himself had a sixteen-hand bay mare, which Konstanz had induced him to buy. She was large and vicious and strong, without grace, but with a great deal of brute force. He rode her in a queer mixture of riding clothes and ordinary lounge garments. Down to his waist he wore his ordinary navy blue clothes, but the lower half of him was in doeskin breeches and long black military boots and might have belonged to the army. Konstanz was charmed with him and ran about with him all over Berlin, so that people said they looked like two dogs on the same leash. Konstanz decided that Martin had never been spoiled by what he

called life, and at twenty-seven was as young and fresh as at twenty-one. Certainly he seemed to be full of joy and vitality, never to have abused himself or to have overtaxed either his mind or his body in any way. Again, the past was all gone from him, and the things that he had done and suffered seemed to have vanished away like clouds at sunrise. Wealth and adulation agreed with his health, and though at times he suffered from what he called nerves, sciatica, heart-trouble, and other inappropriate names for indigestion, which made his temper very bad, he was magnificently well and merry most of the time.

One evening in June, in the dusk of a hot day, Hirchner sat talking to the Countess von Ardstein in the smoking-room that opened out upon the piazza. Dinner was long since over, and there remained but the hours of confidential chat before bed-time. The Ardsteins' country house was a pleasant place for friends to say their says in. One need wear nothing but old shooting clothes all the day and evening. The chairs were all old, comfortable, and large; there was no elegance, merely food and quietness. The wide windows all stood open, the country dogs slept and snored upon the floor, the dachshunds, of which there were three, occupied the chairs. The Countess was beloved by dogs; she had sixteen, four of which had come to her from unknown wanderings upon the earth. Hirchner, like the dogs, was inclined to sleep and snore between the conversations.

He lay back in a large and comfortable English chair, upholstered in red leather, beside a small table upon which were cherries and kirch-drinks. He took some cherries off the plate and threw them into his mouth, and spat the stones out on to the carpet.

"Well," he said, moving the cherries about in his mouth, "I like your protégé."

"Of course," replied the Countess; "I never expected you to do anything else."

"But I am curious to know," he went on, "what particular, what identical thing caused you to take him up, to spend so much on him."

The Countess lifted her eyebrows a little, and began to ferret in her bag for some handkerchief or other, which came out rather the worse for the chase, attached to a silver vinaigrette. She behaved as if she were blind, due to the vanity of foregoing glasses, which she ought to have worn.

"Of course you know about that girl of his."

"You have told me." Hirchner settled himself further down into his chair.

"And now I am so glad he has taken a fancy to this Sophie creature, whom, by the way, I suppose you were fond of, but then it was not serious, and why not you as well as everybody else. She is a beautiful girl. She is light enough, she will not corrode his fancy. Imagine, my dear man, imagine. He was there baking to death in the ardour of her smile."

"Mademoiselle Rosenstein's, you mean?"

"Baum! Baum!" cried the Countess; "Hella von Rosenbaum. She was killing him with an ideal, at least that is my notion. She walked about after him like a leech and kept her eyes pouring adoration upon him. The lad could not move without her moving, or think, I believe, without her thinking after him."

"And yet," said Hirchner, "his fancy seems to have produced this charmingest of light operas, and it seems to me she was a very devoted young woman with a fine idea of love."

"Oh, yes!" said the Countess; "she had the genius of love, but she wore his heart out by encircling it with her arms. That is not the identical reason, as you call it."

"Well?" Hirchner took and clipped a cigar.

"Leipsic is not Berlin, Humbert."

"To cosmopolitanize him," muttered Hirchner through a new mouthful of cherries; "I do not like this centralization, this immense inmoving tendency."

The Countess herself took a cherry and ate all round it so as not to detach the stone from the stalk. "Cosmopolitanization is surely the other way."

"All women want to give men heaven or earth. It is so, by God!" growled the Baron, grovelling with his left hand over the arm of his chair after two cherries that had got lost in the mat. "Let the grass-widow have him."

"I am not a fool," yapped the Countess; "I

will have nothing to do with him now I have got him away from that miserable life." She chose a bunch of three cherries growing together, but one of them was malformed and unripe, so she chose another three of more equal beauty. Hirchner's huge form moved creakingly in the chair, conveying the absurd little red fruits from the plate to his mouth, and the darkness that was never really dark all night gathered about the room in vague clouds. The mountain of cherries decreased.

" I have eaten a great many cherries, I think too many," he said, pushing the plate away from him an inch, but, like most people who are fond of eating, he forgot next minute what he had said and continued to demolish the mountain.

" It is a pity we are no longer young, Katchen," he said, thinking of Martin, who he knew was in the garden with Sophie, and of Lottie and Konstanz —for Konstanz liked her equally with Beda— who were joking in the card-room.

" Those were very tiresome days," replied the Countess ; " how glad I am I have never to pass through the tedium of experience again. Humbert, I am glad I am old."

Humbert sighed. " I do not feel old. I wonder why I have never changed since I was a child— why I never seem to learn anything to do with the game of life, to be as great a fool as ever. I understand the technique and all that, but I am equally puzzled by each new principle I meet. I am

always discovering that everything is new under the sun."

Hirchner ceased speaking and roused himself to drink.

After he had relapsed into his chair, Martin appeared at the window. Both the Countess and Hirchner were impressed by his atmosphere of preoccupation, and the strong disturbance that his concentration made in the air of the room. He seemed to have been running—to be waiting to run again.

" Have some cherries," said the finance minister.

" No," said Martin, whose eyes were fixed on a far part of the garden, " cherries—no, I do not think so."

" Do you love her ? " said Hirchner, like a father to his eighteen-year-old son ; " do you find her as beautiful and as pleasing as you ought ? "

Martin felt insulted a little, but he gave what he thought was the best answer.

" She is in the garden."

Hirchner leaned forward. " Is she ? " He hoped he might be able to see her from that position, but he could not. Martin raised a hand above his head, shut down his fingers as if he were playing a castanet and at the same time imitated the clack of it with his mouth. He let his arm fall, saying sternly :

" I love her ! "

He was standing on the top step of the piazza with his back against the window post. Suddenly

his heart leaped in him and he thought, " I am here amongst these high-bred people." For an instant he acknowledged an inferiority to society, and then, looking at Hirchner's six-foot body and the Countess's little one out of the corner of his eye, felt infinitely superior. He was humble before his idea of society, but in society itself he found himself very much more remarkable than the general herd, for, after all, it consists only of ordinary people decorated by environment. The quiet of evening came over the woody enclosure that was called the garden, and all the happy ideas of love and peace filled Martin's soul. The beauty of a thousand and one stage nights pervaded the small world that he could see, with its romance, its low-hung moon, its dark shadows. The nightingale cried plaintively and long through the deep blue air, and the sweet scents of cedars and hay-grass, night stocks, and old-fashioned roses came up from the dewy ground.

" Why have you left her ? " said the Countess after a long pause.

Martin pretended not to hear her, for he could not very well reply, " We are playing hide and seek, or hunt the girl, or wild men of the woods," because he was twenty-seven and not ingenuous.

" Incomparably indiscreet," said Hirchner, half-asleep, as he fell back into his chair, but nobody heard him or knew to what he referred.

" We are all catching our own fleas," thought the

Countess, upon whom the stage effect of the window and the moon had begun to dawn.

Hirchner also was dreaming of the isolation of human beings; he wished everybody was happy and that they would all join together at something.

Presently Martin went away off the piazza to renew his game, this time more seriously for he had fallen straight into love during his rest at the window.

"What are they doing?" said the Countess, when he had gone.

"Why should I know?—playing the incomparable game of catch-as-catch-can," said Hirchner, from whose mouth rings of blue smoke were ascending. The repose of the beautiful end of day was wrapping itself over the chairs and animals and round the two people. Hirchner lay at full length in his chair and seemed to have forgotten everything to do with finance and the military. He began to murmur to the Countess from under his cloud of smoke.

"Wonderful, is it not wonderful, for ever and ever wonderful!" His virility and the huge power of his animal personality were at rest.

The Countess sighed and moved her hands to a different position, and the dachshunds sighed and wagged their tails under the dream of her caress.

"A night for lovers," murmured the tender Minister of Finance. "But indeed money and war, slavery and cruelty, would never exist but for men. The earth is ever so forbearing with us. Why does

she not ask the sea to leave its bed and smother us with pillows of foam ? "

The Countess sighed again, and again was echoed by the responsive dachshunds.

" Ah me ! " continued the baron ; " and this young man, what is he doing with himself, what is he going to do ! He has earned riches. I feel a wonderful sympathy with him. I love him even as you do, as everybody must. I hope, as you hope, that he likes me. When he walks about, grown up and self-possessed, I am inclined to laugh, and yet I know he is my superior. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God—that is not unlike him. The Holy Book we do not read, Katchen, is wonderful, very wonderful. In the beginning God created the world, and He said, Let there be light, and He separated the light from the darkness, and the light He called youth and the darkness age. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, lest the evil days come and the years when thou shalt say, ' I have no pleasure in them.' " He was thinking how very sad for him it was not to be young again in order at least to be the rival of Martin in the garden. " That poor girl must be tearing her heart out in Leipsic," he added.

" Yes," answered the Countess ; " I feel very sorry for her, but men and genius first. Imagine, if you have any imagination, how she killed him by absorbing him."

" I am incredibly pleased he writes light opera," said Hirchner ; " it is the most human, the most

happy, the most enjoyable thing in the world." He began to hum one of Martin's airs.

"Yes," said the Countess, whose thoughts saw Martin chasing Sophie among the dark trees; "I find it hard to think that he wrote that; all music is astounding. Why think in tunes—who does? I do not, nor do you."

"Astounding," said the minister softly. "I do not believe he is altogether happy." He made this remark hoping that this was the case, for he felt a little jealous of all the gifts of fate to Martin Schüler.

"You are right," the Countess sighed; "he has been serious and grown up till I brought him into the pretty world here."

"Oh, yes, oh, yes, of course you are his fairy godmother!"

After an interval, during which the sleep of twilight gave way to the wakefulness of night, the Countess got up and went to the window.

"I can see them," she said; "he has just caught and kissed her."

Hirchner rose off his chair and yawned with his arms raised above his head so that they nearly touched the ceiling.

"Damnation of damnations!" he said slowly; "you are perfectly right—he is kissing her again, and now, there, she is kissing him." It was hard to say how he could discriminate between the actions. "Come let us shut the window and go in. Venus has capitulated and now Adonis will carry her off

into the woods, or is it Endymion and his moon? Have you seen Paris in red hose run off with the gilt and white Helen?"

"Your fantasies," said the Countess, shaking her fingers loosely, as if she were scattering dew-drops; "how absurd! your fantasies!"

Hirchner gently shut the window as he continued speaking: "Or the blue delphinium hurry the white butterfly to his lips, or why not say Martin von Schüler with the loveliest woman in Berlin. It is all the same, my heart is absolutely captivated: I have a mind to weep."

"Crocodile's tears," said the Countess, whose own sentimental feelings forbade her to sympathize with those of the six-foot financier. She turned and went away out of the room, but Hirchner, whose life on one side was limited by his work, and on the other by the purest animal sensations which occasionally gave him an insight into intellectual truth, stood still and gently opened the window again to be tossed a little upon the radiating waves of romance that spread through the garden.

CHAPTER XVIII

KONSTANZ leant against the buffet of his dining-room shaking a cocktail. He affected a great many Americanisms in such matters as boots, drinks, and hats. He loved anything absurd and up-to-date. Having spent his early years admiring Wilde and Beardsley, now that he was thirty he turned his attention to Uncle Sam, to Yankeeism, and to Boston. "Boston" and "colossal" were his favourite words, just as the favourite words of Hirchner were "wonderful," and "for ever." He now raised his Boston cocktail shaker to his ear to listen to the condition of the ice. Apparently it was satisfactory, for he poured out the contents into a glass and drank them off. Then he hastily pulled on some wash-leather gloves, and seizing a hat and stick that lay upon the dining table, ran to the lift and was conveyed to the ground floor.

He jumped into the first taxi that came along, and throwing himself into a corner, began to read with great speed a further account of the Steinheil murder.

In five minutes he was at his destination, the palace of the Ardsteins, near Unter den Linden. He

bounded out of the taxi and ran up the stairs to the quarter assigned to Martin von Schüler. A servant let him in.

Wolf, the secretary, was writing in the large outer room. He got up directly Konstanz arrived and faded away, murmuring that Herr von Schüler would be disengaged in the space of a quarter of an hour.

There was nothing to do but sit in a chair and re-read the paper or stand on one leg and look at the room. Konstanz preferred standing to sitting, so he went from one part of the chamber to the other, minutely examining every object in it.

Martin moved in sumptuous circles ; the poor for him did not exist. The second floor of an hotel was to him a garret whence issued those English-speaking tourists who have adopted the world and who stare as if to say, " Who are these coarse, fat people in our restaurant ? " The houses in the suburbs and second-rate quarters of Berlin caused him to feel reminiscently sick of his Leipsic experiences. The summer-house of the Ardsteins, which had formerly been their only home, was as near as he got to the shabby comfort of most of the world, but even there everything had an air of refined age. The sofas were baronial, the chairs and tables belonged to the natural surroundings of countesses and minor princesses.

He himself lived in the superb flat which he rented from the Countess von Ardstein. His bedroom was fit for an emperor, and he was glad, because

luxury made him happier than anything else in the world. He took for granted all his surroundings: the mahogany bed, with brass *motifs* of the first Empire under a blue silk canopy, the carmine silk bed-cover, the exquisite linen sheets, the fur blankets. He never asked himself if things could have been otherwise, if his mattress might have been straw or his floor bare boards. He never questioned the condition of any place into which his life led him. All houses, chairs, and tables seemed a part of nature and—created or uncreated, he cared not which—to have had the origin and suffered the history of the world itself. The Countess von Ardstein seemed to have indulged in the furnishing of his apartments that side of her nature which is common to humanity and whose only expression is, " If I had *carte blanche* and such-and-such an amount of money, I would furnish a suite of rooms thus." She went to the utmost limits of the large sum of money that she asked Martin for, if not a little beyond them. She contrasted the voluptuousness of his night apartment with the costly simplicity of the day-rooms. The table of black ebony in the study was a replica of an Italian altar. The black bronze lamp by whose light he wrote was a masterpiece of the modern Cellini, Gregory Comino. The fireplace in black basalt was by the same master. Its pure and severe proportions were relieved by nothing save by one black classic vase placed immovably upon the left end of the mantelshelf in order to frustrate the

inartistic fingers of the maids, and filled with a collection of wax flowers arranged to recall Dutch flower paintings. A black carpet of tapestry worked with flower-bunches partly covered the floor, and upon the obscure walls hung three pictures two by Rubens and one by Titian, whose colours kept Martin's eyes fixed upon them for hours, for he was a prey to red and orange and sky-blue, and to the richness of luxurious forms of art. There was no other furniture in the room but one black empire chair upholstered in cherry-coloured silk to match the long straight curtains at the window. It was not a large room, and the ceiling was high, but nevertheless it gave no idea of being an uncompromising box or a passage room, although it was the only means of communication between his bedroom and the sitting-room. His sitting-room was larger than either his bedroom or his study, and the ceiling appeared to be lower. It had in it a modern picture of Spanish peasants by Alexander Basilikoff, a Polish gipsy, typical of the modern continental feeling. Broad proportions, vermilion, cobalt, black, emerald green, chestnut complexions, flatness and stupidity of feature, such were the characteristics of the picture which dominated the room. The room was dark, almost black; the walls and ceilings were covered with large panels of heavily smoked Spanish leather that had been lightly polished. The junctions of the panels were made with narrow lats of mahogany. Golden curtains radiated the light into this im-

posing gloom from two high windows, and reflected themselves in the polish of the leather and mahogany chairs and the Chippendale dining-table. At night the room was lit by a Spanish centre candelabrum that carried forty candles, and by small electric lamps placed about the room. The fireplace was a large square hole in the wall, on a level with the floor. Above it was fixed as a panel the Basilikoff production. No frames, cornices, or shelves marred the beautiful lines of this room. Martin disliked this picture; he said it disturbed conversations, but he never supposed that it could be taken away. The only addition he made to his room was a convex mirror; a convex mirror was to him the height of pleasure, for the eye, perhaps, if he had been candid, his notion of perfect beauty. He sat for hours drinking wine with his friends and watching their movements accurately reflected in the convex glass. In it his room assumed a mystery and became something beside the ordinary: a comparative criticism perhaps. As he gazed at it from amongst a dozen faces his sense of the æsthetic was roused by the reflected atmosphere of the dark room, profound and strange, enhanced by the glitter of candle-light, by the whiteness of the table-cloth and the men's linen, by human faces and hands, by minature reflections of bright flowers.

Konstanz stood looking at the mirror. He leant against the dining-table smoking a cigarette, and wondered why values were rendered so much more

clearly in a diminishing-glass than in nature. He felt that Hogarth and one or two of the Flemish painters must have painted out of a glass.

Presently Martin came out of the study with a hat and stick in his hand like Konstanz. Konstanz spun round and said;

"I bet my caricature of Steinheil you are off to a house in Friedrichsvorstadt."

"No," said Martin, "I am waiting here till she comes for me."

"I am colossally jealous."

Martin laughed. "I always prefer men to women and women to men."

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Well, when Venus is in the ascendancy I am in love—I like women best—but at other times I prefer men."

A rustle was heard outside the door, and in a moment Sophie von Sebaltz came in dressed in the most charming clothes to go shopping.

She greeted both men merrily, giving a hand to each, and Konstanz hoped she would ask him to go shopping too.

"Why not all go shopping?" she said, "and you shall see how women throw away money on clothes in order to please you, and what a business it is being pretty."

"You are always pretty, anywhere," said Martin; and Konstanz tried to think of a smart compliment to pay, but allowed a second too many to elapse before it came into his mind.

They went down the stairs together, Konstanz a little behind like an intelligent dog, and trying to push his way forward into the intimate company of the most sought after couple in Berlin.

They went to a parade of models where he amused them by playing the clown, and with silly remarks caused their happiness to escape in peals of laughter.

"You dear thing; you are so funny," said Sophie. "I think he is the amusingest creature, don't you, Martin?"

"I think so," answered Martin very gravely; "and you are the most precious, the most sweet woman on the earth."

They pleased themselves by buying her the dress she preferred amongst all those that were shown to her, and she promised to give them a dinner in it at her house with nobody else there. Konstanz gave her also a jewelled amber cigarette holder, and Martin bought her a case to match, and they drove back to tea at his rooms in a car filled with boxes and flowers and jokes and noise and general amiability. This is what Konstanz meant when he said that life had not spoilt Martin Schüler; that one could play at boys and girls with him without feeling forced or stupid.

At five o'clock, after tea, Konstanz went away discreetly and left the lovers together, who became serious directly they were left alone. The whole of the fantasies and fripperies of life disappeared, and they found themselves in the sweetest of

passions, strangers to one another, exhilarating and exciting, and yet one because they possessed each other. They remained themselves and took nothing from each other. They gave one another all the sensations of joy and all the light, stimulating pleasures that neither destroy nor create new souls. Their love was like the notes of a harp, like the cascades of the fountains of Versailles, like the fluttering of beech leaves upon the trees in May. They laughed and kissed, and were serious with the seriousness of two Fragonard lovers whose surroundings are silk and umbrellas and parrots, black boys, white maidens, roses, and loves. Nevertheless, Martin was only gay in speech and thought; his calm, dignified manner, his slow attitudes, gave him still that superiority which impressed the world and made Sophie in her heart afraid of him. She could love nobody she did not fear; she was the archetype of man's dream of womanhood—effeminate, silver-voiced, and silver-footed, with a laugh that rippled with sensuality and eyes and lips always ready to send pretty messages.

CHAPTER XIX

IT may well be said that the sun never sets on the noise created by the Cosmopolitan Gramophone Company, whose offices have for years been situated in the Markgrafen Strasse. Herr Boch and Herr Walcker, the proprietors, kept up a melodious gyrating all over the world. Black discs belonging to them, stamped with a little world supported by cupids, spun round in every country of the globe; at no time were all at rest and the earth quiet. No sooner had those belonging to the garrison at Shanghai ceased revolving than those in India began to go round like the spinning tops of Buddha; continuously they buzzed into noise round the world after the chariot of the sun until the garrison officers at Shanghai met again in the smoking-room of their mess.

Bernard Steinbach stood by the window of the private room of the company's offices on the first floor of their establishment. He had grown fatter since the production of "The Coquettes," almost four years ago, his shoulders were a little higher, his face redder, and the cheeks more puffed out. He hardly ever laughed because the action lifted his glasses off his nose and because he had become grave since the loss of his illusions.

He wore a grey suit that was a little tight for him, and stood at the window with the knuckles of his folded left hand resting upon his hip. In his right hand he held a pipe. He was very troubled and vexed with the idea of seeing Martin again; his mouth drooped, and trouble passed in shadows across his brow. He stared down out of the window vaguely watching the passers-by, and coursing shame, resentment, and embarrassment ran through him and brought the blood to his face. He hardly moved at all for ten minutes; most of the time he kept assuring himself that had it not been for the money part of the question, or had the money been less worth while, he would never have come near Martin again. He had to assure himself of it however.

The yellow autumn sunlight shone on the tops of the buildings opposite, for it was nearly half-past four of an early October afternoon.

Herr Walcker came in; he was tall and Prussian, with an air of having been close shaved about the head since infancy. Steinbach looked round and said by way of greeting, without moving from the window:

"That sewing-machine shop across the road has your name on it."

"Yes," answered Walcker in a pale, highish voice, "that is a branch of the business; my partner and Friedrich Cohen manage that."

Steinbach very much desired to remain at the window in order to watch Martin's arrival, so he

went on talking about the branch firm. Walcker was not displeased to come to the window and enlarge upon its prosperity.

"We make corset machines principally."

"Then you know the joke about the two mistresses of Georges Faber."

"I do not. Our machines are used all over the world."

Steinbach made no comment upon the universality of the "Bochen" sewing machine, who owed her name, as Walcker wished to explain, to the portmanteau of Boch and Cohen. He went on with his story, in which it appeared that a French lady had met a German lady in unfortunate circumstances under Faber's roof and had told her that she was a simple-minded creature pushed by accident into the wrong kind of corsets.

Walcker laughed, and then hurried to explain the pretty idea of the trade-name of Herr Boch's little jewel, for Walcker had all the worst vices and mental attitudes of the over-assistant of a hosiery department.

A large car stopped in front of the house and Steinbach put his head out of the window like a detective. The effort made him redder than ever. He saw a smart man in a navy blue suit and a blue Homburg hat get out of the car followed by a commonplace looking individual in a rough grey overcoat and tan gloves. The man in blue looked like a very smart edition of Martin Schüler. He seemed to have the same shoulders and the same walk.

What were his sentiments as he crossed the pavement, or those as he came upstairs through the show-rooms? He evidently did not intend to meet Steinbach alone since he had brought a chaperon. Steinbach waited, answering, "Yes, yes," not without irritation, to the pompous trade descriptions of Walcker. Schüler seemed very slow. He must be looking at all the photographs of the singers upon the walls, some of whom were probably his friends. Steinbach's patience was not great, but his obstinacy did very well to make up for it. He was always obstinate for a plan or for an advantage, in spite of every delay, and people said that he had the patience of Job, but this was not the case. He had got over his sentiments and emotions some time ago with regard to this meeting, at least that was his impression; but all the same, when he heard Martin's voice outside the door, and saw the handle of the door turn to let him in, he was startled.

Martin entered, handsome and smart and brave, and good health, good looks, and the attractiveness of one whom everybody spoilt filled the whole room. Steinbach had the feeling of struggling through several hoops of paper: he was not happy.

"Well, that is you, Steinbach," said Martin, advancing; "this is my secretary, Wolf." Steinbach was nearly forced to reply as he shook hands with the ordinary creature Wolf, "The former secretary is pleased to meet the present secretary."

However, he felt too sore and uncomfortable to say anything but Good day. Martin suspected that his old friend's feelings towards himself were not all good, and he suddenly became self-conscious, and, looking at Walcker, suggested that they should turn their attention to business.

Everybody became at once impersonal, and in half an hour the whole of the matter, which concerned certain rights in gramophone records of "The Saddest Singer," were settled and the necessary signatures made. No sooner was the barrier of business taken down than Wolf felt impelled by some force to get Walcker into conversation outside the room, and leave his master with the stranger. The inevitable kept Martin Schüler from following them out of the room. He found himself in almost personal contact with Steinbach. He got up and went to the window; he desired to say something but he did not know what. He uttered the words, "There is a sewing machine shop opposite."

"It belongs to the firm," answered Steinbach, whose spirit was taken out of him.

A silence followed that seemed to last two years.

"It is autumn," said Martin after a long time.

"Yes, the trees are yellow in the country."

Martin pretended to look at something out of the window; he half wanted to laugh, to clap Steinbach on the back, to embrace him, to do everything to show how ridiculous he thought the situation. The seriousness of embarrassment did not appeal

to him. They perpetrated another pair of sentences, this time nearer the thoughts in their hearts.

" I am fond of Berlin."

" You prefer it to Leipsic ? "

This necessitated an answer. Martin yawned, and remembered the last scene they had had in Leipsic over an imaginary corpse of Hella, which was more violent on his part than any of the many scenes of that miserable time before his escape to Berlin. It was a long time since the sick illness of violent temper had come over him ; now he felt the cold creeping anger come up to his knees. It rose like mercury in a thermometer suddenly subjected to great heat. He said in a voice full of the metallic sounds of cruelty.

" Well, as you are hostile, so be it."

Steinbach grew redder ; his head sunk on his breast and he readjusted his arms upon the backs of the chairs on either side of him.

Martin had got to the door. In spite of the terrible tension and of the sounds in their ears of ugly ringing and booming bells, they both had a desire to make an effort of friendship, but not the will.

Steinbach began to think of nothing but Hella, and Martin looked at him with a burning curiosity to know his opinion of his conduct.

" It is not desirable for me to stay," said Martin. " There are a thousand things I wish to ask you, but, God in hell, let them lie unasked ! "

" Perfectly, perfectly, just so," muttered Stein-

bach, whose anger was rising up to the top of him, as Martin's had done. " I agree with you, I agree with you."

" Well, you have made some money off me at any rate," said Martin, not out of smallness of mind, but because he really thought that this was some consolation, as indeed Steinbach acknowledged to himself that it was.

After that he went with hesitation down to his car.

Steinbach again went to the window, a sense of loss, a slight despair, a vast consternation in his mind. Now that the meeting was over all those secret hopes that he had not admitted went through the pain of being extinguished. All those natural and human feelings in connexion with his separation from Martin broke to the surface for a minute, and he found it necessary to blow his nose upon his large white handkerchief. In a few seconds he adopted again the general and commonplace view of the actions of the man he had once loved, and moved away from the window in a dreary and not very satisfactory state of mind.

Martin drove off into the country in order to see if the trees were as yellow as Steinbach suggested, and in order to be alone. He sent Wolf home in the tram, for he felt moody and not altogether pleased or happy about the idea he entertained that Steinbach did not think well of him.

" Am I bad? Am I not good? Have I done wrong? Surely I have not done wrong. I was

forced to act as I did—I have always been forced to act as I have done"; and, presumably having convinced himself that the faults of his life were due to the actions of others rather than to his own, he regained his happiness and good temper, and returned home.

With joy he saw that the trees in the Linden were also yellow, and as he drove along under their shade he lost the last vestige of second-rateness that clung to him, and felt glad that never again would he find himself face to face with Steinbach. He stopped the car and got out to walk a little under the trees, from which the beautiful thin leaves fell now and then to the ground, and he paused a moment before he turned up into the street where his home was in order to appreciate the invigorating air of the October evening, with its slight smell of frost, of dried leaves, and of aromatic wood.

CHAPTER XX

ONE morning on a bright day in spring Martin hurried round to see his beloved friend. She lived about a mile away from him and he had to ride down Unter den Linden in order to get to her. He had just finished his third light opera, and a sense of freedom and recurrence of youth came over him, although he had sat up all night. The whole winter had been passed in not too arduous work, which was preoccupying enough to keep him in love with Sophie, who remained the most charming, the most radiant creature alive. Her charm and her loveliness seemed to have increased under his caresses, and he belonged to her in all his free moments as the shadows belong to the sunlight. As he rode gaily down the Linden at an early hour, the shops were washing their faces and had menials manicuring their front doorsteps as it were. Those artful creatures, the stereotyped shop-assistants, who in the daytime dressed in smart clothes and tyrannized over customers, were behaving like human beings as they walked along the pavements to their work: the men were chatting and joking with the women, the girls were amusing themselves at the expense of the boys.

When Schüler came to the Brandenburg gate with the quadriga of Victory upon the top, it seemed to him that its looming proportions were the statue of the mighty German nation, for the sun fell full upon it this morning; but in the evening, when the sun was behind it and cast its huge shadow forward, it seemed like an austere and overhanging rock. To-day birds could be seen perching upon its cornices and even building their nests in the niches that presented themselves. "What a lot of nests there must be in the chariot of Victory," he thought, and as in former days the thought inspired a musical idea. "A cloud of birds fly from the chariot of Victory," he said to himself as he rode under the archway. When he got through the Brandenburg Thor he turned his horse towards the Friedrichsvorstadt. The linden-trees were budding, the sparrows chattering, dogs ran cheerily after their owners, and little children on their way to school were daring to play upon the steps of the Victory monument and the Hall of the Imperial Diet. All nature was merry, so that in spite of a feeling of weariness he kept his restive horse at a brisk walk with the aid of rein and heel. He experienced a curious feeling of happiness. "I am myself again," he thought. Perhaps it was the feeling of youth that dispersed his experiences and gave him simplicity. For a moment he hesitated whether to call upon Sophie or to go for a long ride. He went for a ride and turned his horse to the Charlotten Chaussée because that way was long and straight.

He could ride here at ease and enjoy his morning thought.

He thought he was very much like what he used to be in the old days before Leipsic, and that social life was a little tiring. He began to want to be alone in his little house in the Black Forest, but a consideration of Sophie's feelings drove away the desire. He seemed to see his love for Sophie as a reality and his love for Hella as a far away dream, like a floating castle upon clouds. "Love like that is not to be found down here," he said to himself. "I should like to marry Sophie and carry her off to my quiet den." So he went on talking quietly to himself as one does in the early day when riding upon a horse or walking over a hill. "No, I believe if I were with her all night and day I should tire of her. That is a heresy. Well, I can think of heresies." The notion of Steinbach occurred to him, and he felt a little uneasy and asked himself if there were an after life, an idea which did not really trouble him. "Of course there is," he said. "No, of course there is not. There is a power of evil. I am not pure, but after all I am not so bad." He began to wonder where he was riding to, whether it was to Charlottenburg or to an ultimate goal, but he had only a vague idea of what that goal might be. He decided that he was not yet dead nor had he really lived. He felt for a moment that he had been amusing himself for years and waiting for something, and that in the meantime he had allowed people to handle him and influence

him.Then the idea vanished as he looked at the arch of his horse's neck, and said, "My horse is a good horse." He wondered if people admired him upon horseback, for it seemed that he had looked presentable in the glass of the shop windows of the Linden.

The sun shone down upon him, a light wind blew refreshingly in his face; it wafted the trees about, and the long streamers of water from the public fountains. The trees formed long parallel lines before him, between which ran the ever-narrowing roadway, to which a thin sprinkling of people seemed to be glued, so constant was their number upon it. The people looked very small, especially in the distance, when compared with the wide roadway and the trees.

"How little everybody is!" thought Martin, but he himself felt about as large as the statues dotted about the park, which are mostly of the heroic size and compare well in height with the trees and fountains.

He was unable to conceive the idea that these little creatures walking about the road had erected the Brandenburg Gateway just behind him or the Charlotten Palace to which he was going. It was difficult for him to credit that the builder of palaces was not nature.

"The trees will soon be in full leaf," he thought, a little further on. "How I sigh for the forests of Bavaria! I would like to see Bertha, my sister. Her children must be tall and strong now. Are any

of them musicians? Perhaps one of them will outrival me! No, damned be the thought: I will be the greatest of our family."

Suddenly he was overcome with impatience, and turning his horse, made his way quickly by cross routes to the house of the Countess von Sebaltz.

When he arrived in her boudoir he saw signs that she had risen. He ran into her bedroom. The morning sun filled the apartment, everything glittered with white sunshine. The door into the bathroom was open, and in the doorway stood the Countess, as naked as Venus, drying her ears with a fine lawn towel. When Martin saw how beautiful she was erect in the morning sun he cried out:

"Oh, you remind me of all that I have not attained!"

"How innocent you are!" she said with rapture; "you remind me of all that I have not been."

He began to approach her with hasty awe as if she were a dream, but she vanished into the bathroom and he could hear by the splashing that she had descended into her bath. He walked quietly to the door and watched her bathe herself in the shimmering sunlit water.

When she saw him in the mirror opposite she cried out, "Go away! go away!" and threw a handful of water at him. She was just in the right mood to please him, but then, when was she not!

He retired and sat down upon her bed with a sigh. His eyes ached a little. What hours she

stayed in the water! Presently, however she emerged in a muslin robe-de-chambre, with a huge cape of frills that half hid her face. He rose and went up to her; then put his left arm round her, and with his right hand pressed back the frills of her cape in order to kiss her. The firm muscles of her beautiful youthful back were against his left hand, as he held her well and lightly. She was aware that she was perfectly held. Between his two kisses she adored him, and said:

"Wonderfullest man!"

"Most wonderful woman," he replied, and the lightness and strength of that beautiful embrace could scarcely be excelled.

When they were seated at the breakfast-table, drinking coffee and eating rolls, he said:

"I came to tell you—I came to announce it is done. The third one, dedicated to you."

"Well done, excellently done," she said, stroking his hand. "But my dearest one looks a little tired!"

"I worked till four o'clock this morning." He laughed a love-laugh, and jumping up suddenly kissed her mouth. She was laughing too.

Presently she said, "Have you ever loved anybody as you love me?"

"No one," he replied.

"Have you ever loved anybody at all?"

"I had a most troublesome and heavy-footed passion for a good woman once. She demanded

a complete sacrifice to love : not to herself, to love ! It was all-too-serious. It did not endure."

Sophie sighed and said that she had had her photograph taken.

" Do not give it to anybody but me," said Martin.

" Of course I would not dream of such a thing ! Do I want everybody to have me to stare at ? "

Martin came and knelt at her feet. His feeling of former days was returning. He put his arms round her and hid his face on her breast in order to shut out the present. It was strange for him to have such a strong recurrence of the past. He seemed to have before his eyes a photograph of his youth. His loaded memory, from which up to now he had taken nothing, was perhaps beginning to burst. His thoughts came to a head.

" I am thirty," he muttered, " and I am not satisfied with myself. I am most displeased. Never will I write anything more."

Sophie stroked his hair. " You are only thirty, dearest," she said ; " what is the matter with my little one ? "

His mood of self-criticism passed in a flash, but he still hid his head in her breast.

" How often am I not content," she said, soothing him ; " how often I am displeased with myself ! When I was a girl I was so innocent and young that my only dream was to be the faithful companion of a man and a faithful mother of little children. Fate has given me quite different things to do and I try to do them well. Perhaps your successes

are not quite those you dreamed of, but they are brilliant; does not everybody love and admire you? does not everything you want fall at your feet? Your Sophie does; she is your little slave. Perhaps she is not very good. Some people call her a little fool, and are writing letters to her husband about her. But I do not think I am wicked, and if so I must be wicked because you are so wonderful. Are you not wonderful? Of necessity I am not good."

"I forgot Hella von Rosenthal," said Martin, "as easily as a fledgeling forgets its mother." This seemed to him at the moment a crime. "I may forget you."

"You are a genius," answered Sophie; "everything you do is right. I am sure she does not reproach you; I am sure she has only a few little regrets because she is human."

Martin, who did not want to have the subject of Hella enlarged upon, kissed her under the chin in that small hollow that Frenchwomen are so proud of.

"My darlingest," he whispered, "you smell of wild roses and honeysuckle. That is my idea of you. You are my genius and my muse. How lovely you looked in your doorway. When I want pure inspiration I shall come and watch you bathe yourself."

After he had kissed her he got up and left her. Outside the servant was holding his horse for him. He gave him a large tip, which was unusual, and mounted gaily He rode down to the Potsdam gate,

but the day was so beautiful that he decided to resume his interrupted ride to Charlottenburg. When he got there he stabled his horse and walked to the Mausoleum, which he entered. He liked the entrance with the marble angel and the theatrical light effects. Anything with wings was particularly attractive to him. Entering, he found himself among dead Emperors and Empresses. He stared some moments at the beautiful recumbent figure of the Queen Louise, and a desire to pray came upon him, but to what he did not know: perhaps to Queen Louise. He seemed to be begging of her to lift him up, but out of what he could not tell: perhaps to a love he had forgotten, to a state of mind that he had fallen from. His love for Sophie had none of the depth of passion of those days upon the mountains with Hella. Yes, the pure marble of the statue recalled the snow upon the mountains, and yet Hella was like the deep sea, and Sophie was, in perfect taste, like a carven statue. He did not require a woman who demanded from him the sacrifice of his whole soul: he required one who would fill him with life and joy and the power to do great things. Was Sophie sufficient? Her body was a fine representation of the intellectual. Did he lie within himself, sufficient unto himself like these dead bodies? Should he repel outward influences and, like a great river, flow from his own soul only? His heart seemed full to breaking. He stretched his arms above his head like one who aspires physically, regardless of a

number of Americans who with devout steps were prowling round the great dead of the old world and sniffing their last musty savour with nostrils dilated for the very purpose.

He heard the curator whisper under his breath, "That is Martin von Schüler."

"Would he point me out to them if I had gone my own way?" he thought; "perhaps fame is better than immortality."

The boldest of the Americans dared to ask him for an autograph.

"No," he said in German, "I can write nothing but music"—none of which she understood except the negative. The curator laughed however, and winked at Martin as the party left the place, but he remained behind, and continued his meditations, staring at the floor with his hands in his pockets. His last work had been an effort. He had found it necessary to work up to a standard—the standard of his second opera. He had to keep in the same vein—that was the most difficult part—and at the same level. He was pleased with himself, but he did not feel that a third effort upon the same lines was possible to him, for he did not count "The Coquettes," which was an accident.

"Well," he thought at last, "I cannot stand here all day. I had better go and see if they are overfeeding my mare."

He spent the afternoon choosing a present for Sophie von Sebaltz, in order to commemorate the

occasion. He was not fond of jewels; he liked giving her flowers, but on this occasion he chose a ring which the jeweller's assistant at Wagner's assured him was quite what she liked. It was a cameo of the head of the Medusa, with black hair and a white face upon a black background. "We have ascertained that several queens have worn it, excellency," said the salesman. A Jewish person with a beak nose confirmed this statement. "Aber so!" he said, taking the jewel from Martin and examining it with a lens. "Aber so! It is the finest, the most royal jewel in our establishment!"

Besides this ring he had only given her a jewelled cigarette case and a pearl upon a long platinum chain. For this he had paid about eighteen thousand marks. The pearl always hung near her heart in the most sacred of love's shrines, for he called it his frozen kiss. As for other gifts, he was not fond of books. The only book he had ever given her was Plato's "Phædrus" in Greek, which neither of them could read. He gave it to her because Countess Ardstein had told him that it contained the epitome of perfect love.

CHAPTER XXI

ALTHOUGH Martin Schüler was now thirty years of age, the peahens was not yet brought off. He had not even read Werner's poem; in fact he had almost completely forgotten the whole idea. His second opera, "The Saddest Singer," was a furious success. When he had brought it to Berlin everybody went wild about it. Everybody sang the chief song in it—

> "So beautiful is the singer
> Who sadly sings of love."

It was edited for sopranos, contraltos, tenors, and baritones, with and without obligatos for every conceivable instrument. It was edited as a piano solo, a violin solo, a clarinet solo. Martin made a fortune out of it. It was chanted in all countries and in all languages by every make of gramophone. One heard it as frequently as the "Merry Widow" waltz, or Offenbach's "Barcarolle," which, after a dozen years of popularity still moves the hearts of the bourgeoisie.

One day Martin sat in the out-of-door restaurant of one of the best hotels in Berlin in charming company. Amongst those present the beautiful actress, Tarquine, sat next to him, clothed in an up-to-date

white tailor-made. He chattered with her throughout the luncheon, and she rubbed the whitening off her doeskin boots on to his trousers. Tarquine was one of those very vivacious people who can neither keep their feet nor their tongues still. It was difficult to recognize in this spick-and-span Herr von Schüler, in the smart navy blue lounge suit, with the longish oiled hair brushed up from his brows, the black moustache and the slightly musical tie, that sloppy, neglected-looking youth who used to sit with his elder sister in an attic den, papered with a soiled mustard-coloured wall-paper. He was changed even from the somewhat provincial creature of a few years ago, who bought good clothes off the peg and wore rather too large collars.

Is one ever different from the present: that is to say, has one a past? It is difficult to believe that one's other images were oneself at all and not substitutes.

"Ah!" said Tarquine, 'to-night we shall witness another *succès fou!* Ah, *mais oui, mon tout p'tit homme,*" she exclaimed to Martin, "I intend to make myself a success in the title rôle."

"I have no doubt of it," said Martin, who was in good spirits.

This was the day of the production of his third opera. He was always happy when there was any chance of public glory. He loved his name in the papers, and enjoyed the applause of the multitude, for he valued the acclamation of the herd far above the praise of individuals.

The hors d'ouvres, the soup, the special fish, the delicate entrecôte maître d'hôtel, the duck so tender and young with equally young and tender green peas enhanced with a sauce of apricots and oysters *à la moselle* had all been submitted, approved, served, and devoured. The waiters bowed with the beautiful concoction of Venus before the guests, a stimulating savoury which appeared to be made of pistachio nuts and thin slices of curried ham, but which tasted as strange and delicate as the perfume of an exotic China rose. The luncheon party chattered, gormandized, and roared with laughter. The summer sun poured down upon the awning. Iced champagne stood in pewter buckets, the bottles decently attired in white cloths to prevent the waiters from getting chilblains. The ladies helped themselves to wild strawberries out of little silver baskets. They put strawberries into their champagne so that they bobbed like pieces of red amber upon little golden ponds. The noise and gaiety of the party distressed the grave English family who sat at the next table, and caused them to say, " What terrible manners these Germans have ! " They turned away when Tarquine opened her handsome mouth so wide that the little strawberries could roll into it with the champagne.

" Strawberries ! " said Martin, who was becoming in a better and better humour ; and the others—that is to say, Konstanz, Hirchner, Susie Meyder, Gaiya Salviati and Fritz Zeiss—all went off into roars of laughter over the very improper joke they

all knew about strawberries. Konstanz particularly winked at Gaiya, whom he loved equally well with Lottie and Beda, if not with half a dozen others. Tarquine moved her vivacious feet in glee under the table, and the calves of Martin's trousers assumed the aspect of whited sepulchres. Off the stage she was one of those energetic Dianas who destroy, rend, break, or upset whatever they come in contact with. Her chief charm as an actress was her boundless vitality and her irrepressible liveliness.

" Listen ! " she cried, holding up her spoon with the remnant of her hot-ice in it and waving it rhythmically in the air :

" So schön ist doch der Sänger ! "

she sang softly, as the orchestra, at a whisper from the Herr Restaurantkeeper, struck up Martin's song. It was repeated three times. The gay company paid compliments to the hero and drank to the success of his new opera " The Maidens of Weimar," which was going to be produced that evening. For that matter it was already an assured success, and the hilarity of the party was greatly due to the fact that they were all going to benefit by it. All the guests in the restaurant ceased eating, and enquired from the waiters who the person with the black moustache might be. On learning who he was, several of them stood up to get a better view.

The orchestra ceased playing and turned to look at the hero with whom it felt that it was one.

Suddenly the composer stood up and turned livid

He swore the most terrible oath, blasphemed God and insulted the Emperor, then strode down the steps into the glaring sunshine and vanished down a side street.

The company was astonished. The waiters and some of the guests ran to the steps in order to see what had become of him. A taxi-man driving past opened his door and indicated that they should go with him in pursuit. Three of them did, but they never saw Martin Schüler again.

Nothing serious had taken place. Martin had merely heard, like a faint echo of the orchestra, what seemed to him the miserable chime of a hurdy-gurdy grinding out his over-sung song. Instantly he had had a clear vision of his young God-inspired self gazing out over Heidelberg, and his soul cried aloud with nameless execrations that he had betrayed himself to shame.

CHAPTER XXII

NIGHT was falling over Berlin when Martin returned to his house. He was physically and mentally ill. Where he had been or what he had done all day he could not remember. His mind was filled with the recollection he had of Tarquine as she appeared at the last rehearsal in short chiffon skirts and a hussar's coat. The memory of this and of the fact that his music had been played upon a hurdy-gurdy revealed to him the baseness of what he called his self-betrayal. The best emanation of his brain during the last five years was suitable for a street organ. Ever since he had last seen Steinbach a suspicion had arisen in him from time to time that his life was not as it should be, and yet the success he had had and the pleasure he gave flattered him, and he reassured himself that all was right with him. Nevertheless the new force or the old force, the suspicion of himself, or the dawning realization of his power, or whatever it might be, had caused him recently to become uneasy and on the look out and to indulge more frequently in sharp, loud accesses of bad temper. Now, as he stood in the middle of his bedroom in the attitude of thinking and perplexity,

he began suddenly to shake and became beside himself. He seemed to see all his friends arrayed against him, pointing the finger at him and saying "That man is a failure." He hid his face in his hands as he stood there in the dim white twilight, a black shadowy figure amidst the white walls of his room. A furious desire to shoot himself or to plunge at once into a personal revolution seized him. He longed to wage civil war against himself, to immolate, to annihilate everything of him. He threw himself upon his bed and wept extravagantly. His soul raged against his soul. The blood boiled in his veins and rushed to his head, his heart accelerated, he choked and was desperately sick. He flung himself upon the floor and lay for a long time in an agony with his teeth clenched, his brows contracted, his lower jaw protruded. Tears streamed from his eyes and with his hands he caught the leopard skin rug in a fierce grasp. He lay still in the madness of degradation, and swiftly all the things he had ever done passed through his mind, tinged, stained, and ruined with futility. He fell into a nightmare of horror, in the middle of which his secretary came into the room. When Wolf saw him upon the floor he gave a low cry—he thought he saw a murdered man. Instantly Martin sprang up, anger and passion running like a storm of fire through him.

"Go out of my sight!" he shouted in a transport of fury, neither knowing or caring what he said. "Go! You foul snarer, you beast of the earth!"

His heart trembled, his body shuddered : he thought he saw in his secretary an incarnation of his degradation. Delighted also to be able to make some sensitive creature suffer, he sprang upon him as he cowered against the wall and struck him furiously. " You coward ! you beast of the earth ! " he howled again, " you reptile ! Your insignificance shrivels you in your miserable skin." Martin struck him again. " You loathsome hypocrite. Thank your God I have no weapon. If I had a weapon I would kill you as Saul killed David—transfix you to the wall—smash out your brains. Time-server ! Escape now, escape," he cried, swaying back from the wall and making with his hands the movements of strangling. " God in hell, escape or I shall choke you with my naked hands ; the sight of you is intolerable."

Wolf slid to the door and Martin lunged again and struck him in the back of the neck. Wolf reeled and nearly fell backwards, but managed to gain the door. Streaming with blood he disappeared through it. His dismay as he heard Martin turn the key in the lock caused him to huddle himself upon the ground. His nature was revolted because he had not struck back, but one does not strike a superior officer, one does not strike God or Martin Schüler.

" The fool ! " said Martin to himself smiling, " the fool ! He thinks I am mad. He will probably fetch the police." He flung himself upon his bed in the hope that despair would again fasten down

upon him and blot out his abominable feelings, but it did not. He felt calmer, but he also felt that if anybody turned the handle of his door he would open it, drag him in, and kill him. Soon he slept, but his dreams were uneasy. Leopards pervaded a green atmosphere. Discontent, despair, and anguish drifted together in an indefinite sea, where there were ridges of green and parts of leopards, anguish and despair revolving together in an uneven movement.

CHAPTER XXIII

HE was to have taken Sophie to the theatre to hear his new piece. He was to have taken her out to dinner first—to have brought her flowers and petted and spoiled her. They were to have had a happy evening teasing one another with pleasantries of which they never got tired. She waited a long time for him. She lay upon the sofa of her boudoir. She was not angry because Schüler did not come: she was afraid. She dared not go out alone because she knew that if he found her gone he would be in a mad rage. She had no idea what kept him, but she dared not go and see if he was ill till he sent for her. Her fears were not deep enough to make her cry. She did not cry easily; perhaps her feelings were never very strong, or perhaps she was philosophical. She lit a cigarette and drank some coffee.

At ten o'clock she established herself at the window, and, standing there holding apart the sulphur-coloured curtains, she looked like a beautiful picture by some French follower of Whistler. The tones of pale sulphur and delicate pearl-pink, shadowed with grey by the bright blue dusk of the evening, the long chiffon dress that hung straight

upon the floor, the white ermine coat unmarred with black flicks of tails, showed beautiful and soft as a picture upon a flat surface in the light of the shaded lamp. Her delicate right hand had upon it the black and white ring that Martin had given her. It looked like the exotic signature of the artist. There was nothing real about her. Frequently she was unreal: a fairy princess. To-night she was at the zenith of her beauty. Physically, in her beautiful pale clothes, she was a faultless dream, reminding one of the most perfectly grown malmaison carnations, of pearls without flaw, of ivory carved into eastern houris with black onyx hair. She was an object of art.

When it was quite dark Martin awoke and immediately took his hat, unlocked the door, and hurried down into the street. It was half past eleven. The lights in the street were brilliant. He turned into Unter den Linden and walked rapidly under the emerald green trees that seemed in the powerful light of the overhead lamps to be made of jewels. He passed the gay cafés where everything was glaring vermilion and bright yellow and dark green, as if they were cafés on the stage. Above him stretched the dark purple impassive sky, around him was noise and laughter and brilliance. There was no sympathy in anything. When he was brilliant he was the god of brilliancy; when he was alone in the forest he was the god of the night; but to-night he was alone in the brilliance. He walked

on to the gateway that seemed to be the gateway of life, and went under it as if he were returning to hell. All the dramatic feelings of which he was capable rose in him. He longed to create a sensation, to die of an attack of the heart under the arch of the gate, to go mad and rave screaming down the Linden, to have wings and be carried upon them up into the sky out of life and the desperate state he was in. He felt himself sinking in a sea, and nothing, he assured himself, nothing in the world, could raise him out of it.

Soon he found himself entering Sophie's house, ascending her stairs, and going into her boudoir. The light and the sweet perfume made him feel tired.

Directly he appeared she ran to him and threw herself into his arms. He did not know what to do with her. He wanted to behave so as to make himself feel happy and to remove the despair out of his heart. The soft feeling of her clothes soothed him a little: to gather fur and satin and chiffon under one's hand gives at least a sense of physical well-being. When he had moved his hands about on her a little he thought he would speak.

"I am done for." He seemed to have said something like it before. Everything seemed a reiteration. His life was stirred into a whirling pool; events were now in the future, now in the past.

"Oh! how?"

"How? How should I know."

Sophie's heart sank—evidently he was madly angry.

"Was the play not well received?"

"I have not been to the play. My heart is broken: I am dead: I am a writer of *opéra bouffe*."

"But——"

"I tell you I am dead. Take your arms from me: I am a corpse."

She did not move.

"Forsake me, I say: all have."

Still she did not move.

He thought how splendidly devoted she was. She herself neither believed what he said nor saw any reason to desert him. She had no idea what to do and was moreover frightened. She liked to hold him for protection.

She put her face up and kissed him.

He buried her in his arms, and, picking her up, put her on the divan and threw himself beside her

She loved him very much just then: all her excitable emotions were satisfied. He began to breathe heavily and to sob.

"Tell me," he said, "I am dead."

She stroked his head. "No, no."

"Tell me I am a failure."

"What!" she whispered; "why, you can do anything in the world."

"How can you tell?"

"I know."

"How do you know?"

"Because I know."

He raised his head and looked at her.

"Tell me what I am to do."

"To be brave."

"How am I to be brave?"

"To go away." The time-honoured remedy was the only suggestion she could make.

"To go where?"

"To the Black Forest."

He began to tell her about his life. He kept her awake and talked to her until morning dawned. He told her the most exaggerated story of his past, which was far different from the truth, in which he had suffered a thousand dramatic and awful moments, and been tortured and made happy beyond the lot even of mythical beings. He gave her an idea so terrible of his sufferings as a youth born to genius, of his betrayal—as he called it—by Steinbach, of his destruction—as he imagined it to be—by Hella, that her imagination was stirred and all those little-used forces of thought in her took from his grotesque, magnificent recital enough fire to kindle in him a flame of hope, a desire for the future, and a will to be more wonderful than anybody that had ever lived in the whole world. At cock-crow he left her and went away to be by himself in order to dream that he was young and that all that he had just said existed only in his imagination. Unfortunately, his flame of hope was not very strong: his defeat was heavy and smothered it into grey smoke. It lay and smouldered for a long time, and neither

Sophie nor Wolf had any power to cheer him from the deep depression and loneliness that came over him, or to draw him out of the muddy fen of misery that he had fallen into.

SCHWARZWALD

SCHWARZWALD

CHAPTER XXIV

MARTIN SCHÜLER left Berlin on the 13th of July in his automobile. He felt no regret as the car carried him for the last time down Unter den Linden. Again the past was closed down by a departure. He sat alone in his blue Mercedes thinking of nothing, dreaming of nothing, but he was experiencing the whole of the rest of his life. What he saw as the automobile and his past life grew further apart, he afterwards realized. The rain was pouring down in torrents; the heavy drops pattered on the leaves. The words "Unter den Blättern" came into Martin's mind. "Blättern," short and sharp and hard, was repeated a thousand times by the dripping trees. It might mean something, it might mean nothing; but whatever its significance, Martin never forgot it, and one may now hear, if one thinks fit to go to those rare performances of Schüler opera, "unter den Blättern," "unter den Blättern, Blättern, Blättern, Blättern," repeated mercilessly through a whole episode by the violins.

For hours he lay in the car physically at ease in the luxury of solitude. Wolf, Sophie, and the

rest of his paraphernalia were in the train. He thought of them for a minute, as if they were a couple of boxes, and then solitude came back like a refreshing dream. He dozed and slept in that luxurious car, cut off from the entire universe.

They drove through Dresden ; the houses passed by him rapidly with the rain and the trees and the pedestrians, like false objects in a *mise en scène.* The whole of Germany seemed to be swimming in rain. The rain beat fiercely upon the car and splashed and spat round the wind screen upon the unfortunate chauffeurs, for Herr von Schüler never went a long distance without two, so that when one was exhausted the other could take his place. As dusk came on it became impossible to see the road with the screen shut, so Bergensen, the Swedish mechanic, opened it, and the rain cut and drove in upon their faces. Schüler lay comfortably upon the mauve corduroy divan, his dinner case and tantalus open beside him. Drops of rain splashed into the car from time to time, through the slit of open window. The condition of the weather filled him with absurd joy. The chill, heavy wetness of the atmosphere, the dark gloom of the sky, gave him a memory of Schülersholm, on lake Tittersee, where in the morning he would find himself. In his mind he cried to Thor and Wodin and the Norse gods of violent nature to let loose the fountains of heaven and pour upon the earth an exceptional deluge of rain.

The endless motion of the car ceased at some

point in the night, and Schüler awoke to the fact that the world had ceased to go round and that death is a negation of movement. Voices were talking to the chauffeur. In a few minutes Martin put his head out of the window and said:

"Who is this? Where are we? What is the matter?"

"Regensburg, Herr Count, Regensburg—the authorities of the bridge."

"Ah, Regensburg," said Martin, and got out. It was about half-past eleven o'clock at night. A group of men came round him at a respectful distance.

"Water was necessary, sir," said the French chauffeur; "also to cool the car; also the authority of the bridge."

"Ah, the sacred stream!" said Martin, advancing to the group of people. "Permit me, I would like to look over."

"This is a very old bridge," said one man.

"Very old, very old," said three or four others.

"It is still raining," Martin answered.

"But not as before," said the police official.

Martin had on only a thin lounge suit and no hat; upon his feet were thin shoes.

"What do you think of the river, Prince, if one may interrogate?" said a bold late diner-out.

"It seems very black," said Martin, who was aware that the river was the highway of Europe to Constantinople.

Somebody lit a newspaper, and when it had flared

up let it fall over the black chasm of the bridge The river was too murky to give a reflexion.

"That is very beautiful," said Martin, as the newspaper sailed slowly downwards like an angel of heaven into hell.

"Your car is ready, sir," said the French chauffeur.

Martin still lingered at the corner of the bridge, looking down into the abyss. After a few minutes he said:

"On it comes from under, and hangs like hair upon the piers, and streams longer and longer till it grows to the sea."

"Yes," said the man next to him: "it is always the same water under this bridge; we love it, it is so familiar:

> "Our water is so familiar.
> Thou art my under- and my over-going.

"Not a rhythm to admire, Herr Count."

Martin leant over the parapet. His eyes were accustomed to the dark. He could see streaks of the onflowing river.

"What is your over-going?" he said to the man who had spoken to him.

The man, who was young and had the silhouette of one given to thinking, made a gesture with his hands to represent the bridge and the river. "At right angles," he said, "at right angles over and under, onwards with motion and onwards without motion, but both of them are permanent. The

ripples round the pier change very little; they only change to become what they have been before. The road over the bridge is the same: mend it, mend it, and the same holes reappear. It is all based on the fundamental structure and the mathematical idea. Everything is based on the philosophical notion: that and the mathematical idea are one."

Martin put his hands on the parapet and stretched his arms so that he stood upright. He looked at the would-be philosopher and said, "Over and under in opposite directions: there you had a true thought; that is the sort of thing I admire, but I myself never illustrate glimpses into eternity. Over and under in opposite directions is enough; I shall sleep well to-night. Thank you; we have something in common."

The man who had spoken felt ashamed of himself, as if he had made an object of the description called applied art.

Martin moved and began to get into his car. He felt as Napoleon felt when he got into his carriage after a successful battle. He looked at his watch as Napoleon frequently looked at his: his head down, the timepiece in his right hand.

"Twelve," he said, and an idea came into his head.

"You Regensburgians," he said, "you are a little behind Berlin."

"Indeed," said the police constable, "the clocks will strike midnight soon."

Martin took his foot off the step.

"Does the river cease flowing at midnight?" he said.

The police official answered without being able to help himself. "But no, time does not matter to it."

Martin got into the car. "Good-bye," he said to the pedestrian crowd. "To the Schwartz Wald," he shouted to the chauffeur.

"Adieu, Herr Diavolo!" said a voice.

Martin looked out again. "Auf Wiedersehen!" he cried, and everybody roared with laughter except the philosopher, who was trying to remember the exact words he had used to this prince of darkness, in order that while singing his own praises he might not quote by mistake portions which he wished to forget.

The car left Regensburg. Martin felt the approach of the mountains and forests. After midnight the rain began again to pour in fierce torrents. As they left Regensburg he heard the hour of night echo from a hundred chimes. The clock in the interior of the car answered irritably and electrically with twelve wearisome small pings.

"You beast!" said Martin, kicking its face till it broke "you unsymphonic parasite!" He laughed to himself and rolled himself into comfort on his couch.

The car advanced southward in that intense black night. The French chauffeur had in his mind the whole of the road from Berlin to his destination.

Its chief contours, towns, and proportions were present to his sight. Like a narrow white nerve in the darkness of the night it lay before him, and his senses were all of them aware of the familiarity not only of the part he had just traversed, but of the part he had yet to traverse. He was interested in the Grand Prix. He insisted upon driving the whole way in order to establish a record, and the Swedish mechanic, who preferred slumber and occasional sweet draughts from a bottle of cognac to straining his eyes and establishing records, made no objection.

In the woods below Regensburg, Martin opened a window of the car. He sat close beside it and allowed the wetness to strike his face. The woods stood silent in the merciless downpouring of the rain. Black and dark were the caverns of the trees under the boughs; a wind stirred, and in a long series sounds of scattering drops ran from end to end of the forest roads. The wind passed, and again all was silent and still, save for the endless unrhythmic pattering of the rain.

The motion of the car was swift, and Martin felt in it like some vague adventurer of dreams. They passed through the woods where in the twilight of evening evil beings hunted the white hart with hideous cries and with savagery caught late-straying village girls for a prey; where charcoal-burners dwelt in huts, and in the evening hours gradually became transformed into beneficent old dwarfs, who, with leafy heads and eyes inherited from fauns,

pried about to guard late goers; where, in height of moonlight nights, fairies streamed in wreaths among the boughs singing small drunken chanties and making lovers who heard them mad with their sounding honey and music-making flowers. They passed through glades where in the depth of night darkness lay deeper than in the shadow of the trees, where the sound of human foot, or the chime of bells, or fairies, or any of those things particularly loved by man, have never been heard or seen. It is the open spaces of the forest that are fearful. Here there is a void that seizes upon the heart and makes the mind stop. The wanderer shrinks back into the shadows where it is warm, and there are rough trees which respond to the sense of touch.

To-night no ghosts or fairies, beasts, magicians or late travellers were on the prowl. The rain killed everything supernatural with its wetness. The hills with their castles, the terraced vineyards near the villages, the small churches and wooden houses filled with little people of the size of matches, were still, silent, and asleep. In his imagination this was Martin's view of the world. He sat at the window as the car drove past hill and village, over bridges and again into the woods, and felt that the world was on a very small scale.

The French chauffeur had much the same view, except that for him everything was further reduced in order to accommodate itself to the dimensions of his half-inch ordnance map.

Martin slept for a few hours again, and when he awoke the heavy rain had ceased to fall. The car was winding up the steep roadways of the Hartz Mountains. It was still dark, but the chill air of dawn filled all the valleys, and a wan reflexion of the coming day was cast up from behind the eastern horizon. Martin pulled the rugs closer round him and changed his position, in order to be able to see the rising of the sun. It was as natural for him as it is for most living things to keep himself towards the sun. Last night he had sat looking out of the car in the direction of the west and at dawn he changed his position automatically eastwards.

The car came out in a clearing of the forest, where the timber had recently been felled. The logs still lay upon the ground. The pine trees stood round in a wide circle mourning their companions' fall, in the pale light of dawn like soldiers upon a battle-field.

Slowly the sky became greyer and the forest soft and dark, but not with the black darkness of mid-night. Everything was unsubstantial, decomposite, like a soft lithograph, like a world of millions of dimly coloured chalk specks set together in flat masses: the darkest green forest, the fog-coloured grass that in the widening light became tinged with green, the road an indefinite soft pale streak, the fallen logs shadowy corpses in faint red uniforms. Over all hung the heavy grey clouds that in the west were still black with night and in the east faded into the day.

Again the car went into the pines. The road wound up a steep place in the hills, and when it came out upon a crest the day was near at hand. The light came at long intervals in jerks, as if thin films slipped off the face of the unrisen sun from time to time. A breeze passed over the earth and died away. Martin leant out of the window. The dawn had come. The forest became substantial, the grass was full of grass blades, the road of stones. In the east a long yellow rent appeared in the clouds, which began to move towards the west with those curious flat, stiff movements of the beginning of the day. The rift widened and showed the blue of heaven. Very slowly the clouds crept away from the light, like a host of old whales, and half the vault of heaven became opened in the clear upward light cast by the rising sun. The turning of the earth became perceptible as it rolled over into the east, and Martin felt the instinct of nations to climb up the world westward, so as not to be pitched into the abyss. The colours of the earth revived, birds chirped and moved, and a perfectly clear cold atmosphere descended from the height of the morning upon the forest. Martin sighed; his soul filled with the perfection of that new day, unwarmed yet by the passion of the sun, unwearied with the consciousness of existence. He stopped the car at a high place, and got out to enjoy the sensations of the early hour. He was stiff and tired with sitting, but presently he regained his suppleness, and went towards a place from whence sixty or seventy

miles of country could be seen in all directions. He turned himself slowly round like the hub of a wheel, and swept a gigantic circle with his gaze : such is the power of the human mind, that he saw in that one turn all and everything contained in a circle nearly four hundred miles round. The black, wet night was crawling to the western rim, while in the east the silver of the sun's first rays was striking upward into a sky of amethyst and water-green where small yellow and rose clouds drifted like falling flowers. The whole expanse of heaven was in fairest light.

Before the gilt sun came up Martin returned to the car : he had no desire to see the red husband of dawn ravish her beauty. The instant of the day's perfection was so short that he wished to prolong it by shutting out its decay from his sight. The car drove on, and he slept again like a drunken white carouser on his way home from a feast. His head sunk on his breast, his hands lay on each side of him at the ends of his loose arms, the fingers curled inwards and upwards as if they held vanished rose leaves ; his feet were crossed, his knees wide apart, and an odour of dank human breath, of cigars and wine hung about him. For all that his face had the expression of a sleeping child, with pursed lips and drooping lashes, and his dreams were foolish, charming, and fairy-like.

CHAPTER XXV

ONE day Martin Schüler sat alone in his beautiful villa upon the shores of lake Tittersee. Sophie von Sebaltz had returned to Berlin, and he felt relieved. Although it never occurred to him that he was tired of her, for she made no demands upon him even if she gave him nothing, he had a sense of freedom now that she was out of the house. He looked grave and serious, and thought that now at last leisure was his in which to consider where to turn and what to do. The downfall of his conceit had at last brought all the rubbish in his mind away with it. He was now proud and humble, competent and mature. Although he had never lacked competency there had always been a certain air of easy success about him. He had looked successful; now he no longer did.

The study that he sat in had been designed for him by Frederich Morgensohn and carried out by the Arthouseconstructors Company. Nothing in it was incongruous. Upon the black and gold furniture were black and purple cushions worked by a clever woman, the artist employee of the company, in bunches of conventionalized sweet-

williams of a Teutonic Poiret stamp. A black and gold chessboard pattern embellished the frieze, and the walls were decorated with alternating panels of gilt paper and art trees. The black wood writing-table, inlaid with a sylvan episode in keeping with the trees, held a large photograph of Frau von Sebaltz, especially taken at Schüler's request. Across it was written "To my dearest friend ! ! ! " followed in the German manner with several exclamation marks. The composer of three successful light operas sat contemplating it without seeing it.

The weather was calm, still, and mysterious. Long clouds lay invisibly in the heavens and gave them a funereal darkness. Pale primrose sky showed here and there in streaks. Outside the house, everywhere and in all directions, were the gloomy trees of the Black Forest. They crawled from south and west, north and east, over mountains and valleys, round lakes and along rivers. It seemed that they were all walking to the beautiful villa, to see what Herr von Schüler intended to do with himself. An atmosphere as of something extraordinary pervaded everything. The house had no garden, but an artfence of heavy and simple design kept the trees from stepping upon the little villa and crushing it to death.

Martin got up and went to the drawer in which he kept interesting objects referring to the past. He sought in it a few moments, and took out the manuscript of the peahens. It was still tied with the piece of string put round it by Werner. To

his knowledge no hand had ever undone the knot since Werner made it. Feeling a little sentimental and a little curious, he put the bundle of yellow paper to his nose. It had the pleasant odour of old books. He smelt it again, and the smell made him desire to open it. Very curious, he took the yellow, frayed bundle to the writing table and unfastened the string. The sheets, which were folded over lengthways, still lay together from the long habit of nine years. He ran his hand up the inside of the middle crease to flatten them out. Werner's handwriting, neat, small, and professional, lay before him. It was so many years since he had seen it that he had no recognition of it. It was not familiar and roused no feelings, but the fact of holding it in his hand made him recollect how much his technique had grown since those old days, what power and what mastery he had acquired over the hundred or so notes in human circulation, what delicious harmonies he had since discovered. At the same time he seemed to feel that in former times he had had a purer inspiration, a clearer sense of poetry, a finer charm, a greater intellectual sincerity than had ever beautified any of his mature scores.

He sat and looked across his large writing-table out of the window in a dream. It was the first time he had ever experienced a clear vision of the past, or had sought to remember anything out of it. Up to now the present and the future had been sufficient for him. He had never yet drawn upon his resources: he had taken everything out of the

air, out of his friends, out of the incidents of his life as they occurred.

In a short time he began to read the manuscript of the peahens.

CHAPTER XXVI

MARTIN put down the manuscript and lay back in his chair ; the force of the inspiration removed his thoughts; and he felt a contraction in the front part of his head. He shut his eyes, hunched up his shoulders, and threw his body violently forward so that his elbows rested on the table. He covered his eyes with one hand and ran the fingers of his left hand up into his forelock, so that the palm supported his head, and with the thumb and little finger spanned his forehead and felt the contour of his brows. The shape of his head was exceedingly pleasant : at each temple it was flat, and from there curved upward and outward to form the square of his forehead. He thought that creation was in the forehead ; he could feel the effort of imagination between his eyes ; from there backwards to points above his ears he had the sensation of creation.

He did not think out what use he should make of the manuscript ; he felt that he wished to conceive something magnificent, something that should be the outcome of all his experience, finely constructed upon intersecting arcs or upon converging lines or upon curves of balance. He gave himself a climax,

a point, and again shut out the light with both his hands. After a few minutes he felt a motion rise, burst, and break into a million falls. He had conceived his idea. It was not expressible in words. His throat was tight, his brain contracted, the muscles at the side of his jaws were distended in the effort of clenching his teeth. He opened his eyes and, without thinking or flickering his eyelids, took some lined paper and began straight away to note down the beginning of an opera in music. He put it all down. Very slowly he set the idea that came out of his mind straight down on paper with immaculate notation. He paused frequently, his eyes half shut as if he were focusing something, but he had not a single image or sound in his head. His hand obeyed some unknown force in his mind that had its seat in the middle of his brows, and drew pains from the sides and back of his head. After a time his consciousness returned and he began to think.

"The Opera House is large; it will be full of spectators. There will be a large orchestra and a large stage. I myself am in the centre box; there are lights, there are natural limitations"; and his well-trained brain began to control the force of his intellect and to keep before him every detail of a finished production. From that moment he wrote nothing without having always before him the whole of the finished production. He himself was a spectator of his own work. He had never heard it before, and knew nothing of it except the tendency

until he actually put his hand on the paper. Then the substance slowly came into being, with the utmost labour of imagination, but perfect in so far that what he wrote needed almost no correction.

Never in his life did he think out anything the day or week before he wrote it. After the idea had been conceived—sometimes as a faint beating of the heart, sometimes as a moment of amazement over a combination of colours, sometimes as a vague dream inspired by two thoughts, a few words, the leaves of a tree or a picture—he let it vanish until the materials for writing were at hand. He knew that to write directly from inspiration was the only true method. To write from memory of the thoughts of inspiration was to lose the force, the genius and beauty of the conception. " I might as well copy another man's work," he said to himself.

After five hours, dazed and half blind, with the vision of an opera house full of wings, scenery, dressing rooms, orchestra, and seats still perfectly distinct in his mind, he put down his pen The first episode was finished—the opening of the whole thing was written down : grand, subdued, mysterious, and vague, with a vagueness that was definitely constructed. The beginning of a new opera had been made. His eyes still half shut, Martin got up and went to the window, saw nothing from it but blue lines, and walked round the room, pausing now and then to put his hand on some piece of furniture and support himself. Soon he threw himself into a chair and, shutting his eyes, lost himself

again in the depths of a black night. Unconsciously he felt his head, of which he had become enamoured, and, assuming one after another a variety of attitudes, went through perfection in ecstasy and darkness. Probably a spectator would have laughed to see him take up those marvellous attitudes, unless he had been a genius also. Each one contained an idea of the true line inspired by the extraordinary completeness of his unconscious thought.

Presently he came to himself and a long wave of joy flooded his heart: he was young again, he was twenty, but full of experience, omniscient, and powerful. The wild force of his imagination drew him out of himself, and he was compelled to go out of the house down to the lake to stand, silent and exulting, and watch the evening fall. The uneasiness that from time to time had disturbed his charming efforts of the past nine years, his comprehensive observation and his technical perfection, and the last terrible catastrophe of realization, broke in upon him and tore the exultation out of his heart.

"I am complete and done for," he cried, and, going quickly indoors again, shouted for Wolf.

Wolf hurried to him instantly.

"Wolf," he said, taking hold of his coat fiercely, "look at that, look at it; inform me if there is any hope." Wolf looked at the fragment, but not having the power of imagining the nature of a mountain from a small stone off it, was bewildered.

Martin came towards him again, and again seized his clothes.

"What!" he shouted, "what! Have you not formed an opinion?"

As quickly as lightning Wolf put an expression of awe upon his face and, turning round, said:

"That is magnificent."

"Do not judge me by the old rubbish," cried Martin; "do not lie to me."

"It is wonderful," answered the secretary, who had a very high power of simulating enthusiasm.

If Martin had been in a less wild state he would have seen through him, but instead he appeared satisfied, and stretching his arms wide said:

"It is simply beautiful. It is my boyish conception. I have recaptured it: in those days I was a genius. Werner's poem has preserved me for myself. I never read it until now."

Wolf gazed at his master with worship.

"Oh, Wolf!" he cried, picking up the manuscript of the peahens and thrusting it under the secretary's nose, "smell it, smell the musty leaves. How long have they lain in the drawer! God in hell! I can remember all those old days. Help me, dear Wolf. The little episode of nine years is over. Wolf, Wolf, do you help me!" Wolf's eyes shone with genuine and perfect adoration, and he said with overflowing tears in his voice, "How wonderful you are."

Martin knelt upon the writing-chair, and set his face close to Wolf's, who instinctively stroked his hair.

Martin, whose eyes were full of a curious inhuman

light, said, "Keep my feet upon the earth for me, even if my head is among the stars."

Never in all his life had Wolf seen anything to be compared with Martin's expression: it drew the whole of his soul out of him into his face. With a most extraordinary uplifted heart he looked straight into Martin's eyes with all his devotion and humility, and understood the power of his master's genius.

"The stars are effervescent round my head: I hear them bubbling in my ears. Oh, Wolf!" he said, "how marvellous are the true far wanderings of a young man, and the mad dreams of our youthful years. I am now returned to the dawn of my life. I was a wonderful young man, but I am not going to be less wonderful nor less beautiful now. The dreamer and the experienced cynic are here together; I know all, I can do everything. It takes a lifetime to perfect a work of art such as I have dreamed of."

The emotional crisis was over. Wolf stood patiently listening to what might be said, and Martin, taking up the manuscript again, said, in a matter-of-fact voice:

"I am fortunate; Werner caught me and preserved me in this lyric." He smelt it again, as if it contained all the perfume of the woods of Heidelberg, and the smell of himself in his one-and-twentieth year.

CHAPTER XXVII

THAT night after dinner Martin went out. He seemed to disappear into the forest. When he had gone Wolf could not believe that he would ever come back, and walked in a nervous rage from the top of the house to the bottom. It seemed to him that no person intimately associated with Martin Schüler could possibly avoid becoming enslaved by him. He went into the art study and arranged those papers which he knew were not sacred, he went into the dressing-room and hated the valet who looked after the clothes. He walked into the bedroom. A large portrait of Sophie von Sebaltz stood on the table beside the peasant art bed. Another, more elaborate, tinted after the photographer's idea of colour, hung on the bare wooden wall surmounted by an old laurel wreath, a remnant of the gala performance of "The Saddest Singer." He stood a moment beside the table in the window where the personal knick-knacks lay, and desired very much to take away something as a memento, for he knew that it was very unlikely that Martin would ever give him anything.

His simple personality was capable of very strong

feelings, and in particular he had the bitterest sense of rivalry. He hated Sophie with the whole of his emotion of hate. She seemed neither good nor beautiful to him: he thought her on the contrary selfish, spoilt, petty, and vain. Although he hated fiercely, in the silence that he had so much of, all Martin's friends except the Countess Ardstein, he very much wanted a companion to whom he could communicate his sentiments and who would share them. At the art villa his passion of jealousy was three times fiercer than in Berlin. His position in Berlin was so inferior to that of Schüler's other associates that it seemed irrational to be over angry, but here he felt himself proprietor of loneliness, and any third person whose presence made his absence from the dinner-table and the private smoking-room necessary was a maddening intruder. He spent a great deal of his time with Martin, who found loneliness, in those moments when he was not at work, very unpleasant.

He sat down in a chair in his master's room, and asked himself if there had ever been so extraordinary a person as Martin Schüler, one whose brutality was absolutely negatived by the most wonderful charm; for he seemed to him to be the most charming and fascinating man that could possibly have existed. Wolf's face lost its look of everyday life, and all that was best in him came to the surface: such small share of divinity as he had made a faint halo in the dusk of the room. He was very tired. The demand made upon him that evening to

simulate enthusiasm seemed to have taken his vitality. He was uneasy when he thought of that manuscript downstairs. He could not believe, in spite of his belief in its creator, that it was anything rare. His imagination could not create extraordinary phantoms of unproduced works. He had to see the whole to believe in it.

He sat in the chair upstairs lost in thoughts which were human and simple. His hands were folded in front of him, his face stuck forward, his head a little on one side. The muscles of his face were relaxed as if in sleep. Presently he got up, shook himself like a dog, and went downstairs again. Martin was standing in the doorway that led out of the house. At any rate he had come back this time.

Martin turned round as he heard his steps, and said:

"You read pleasantly, Wolf; read to me. Let us sit here and read."

Wolf went towards the door of the smoking-room.

"What do you prefer?" he said.

Martin walked over to a cane chair and sat down.

"Something soothing, something accommodating: Ibsen, I think, or Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales."

Wolf was not in the mood to smile at the idea hat Rosmersholm or Hedda Gabler were particularly soothing: they seemed soothing to him, because he understood Martin's meaning. He went into the library and came back with seven or eight volumes. He sat down.

"You do not like Tolstoi?" he asked, bending over the pile of books which he had put on the floor.

Martin had lit a cigarette. "What, for instance? Tolstoi seems to have written about a thousand books."

"'The Cossacks,'" said Wolf, picking up a small volume.

"Is it soothing?"

"Yes"—Wolf was conscious of altering the meaning of words—"it is soothing."

"Very well"—Martin lay further back in his chair—"but first I choose to be read the Ice Maiden. That is what I have been thinking of all day."

What had occurred to him in the forest Wolf could not guess, only he had a sensation that Martin was changed, that he had ceased to be a man of the world. It was not because he asked for fairy stories to be read to him that he seemed changed; it was partly because his manner was different and his appearance a little less brilliant. He seemed to have become less hard, less vivacious, less energetic. It would have surprised Wolf, but he could not have said why, if Martin had broken into one of his frequent irrational bursts of sarcasm, or said anything witty. A vague fear seized upon him that he was ill, and he could hardly induce himself to find the pages of the Swiss story.

"Well, the Ice Maiden, my old Wolf," said Martin impatiently. "Read slowly the descriptions of the scenery, especially those parts referring to the Bernese Oberland. I shall never go there again.

I believe it is seven years since I was there. Have you been to Switzerland?" He spoke slowly, and seemed tired and dreamy.

"I went once when I was at Cambridge in England, for winter sports," answered Wolf, and he got up to turn on the electric light.

"Leave them a little longer," said Martin; and Wolf sat down again patiently.

"You have never been there in June?"

"Never."

"You have never smelt the torrent of the Jungfrau swollen with melting snow, nor seen the flowers in the woods at Interlaken?"

"No."

"Nor ever sat behind the monastery church with your girl? I had a girl in those days."

Wolf, whose heart had frequently been touched, was sympathetic; he agreed with Martin's unspoken thought that Sophie was not to be classed with the girls of romance.

"I was a fool," continued Martin; "I loved to the exclusion of everything else: I certainly wasted a whole year on love."

Wolf moved a little nearer to him; it was ghostly and queer in the darkness of that forest house. Reminiscences always made him apprehensive of phantoms in which he did not believe.

"I do not care for any of that sort of thing now. I find my heart is as cold as water. Affection and sympathy are worth passion a thousand times over; passion is nothing unless you are twenty.

Now read to me, read to me; read with a shaded light that I may lie in the dark, and know again the whole of those days at Lauterbrunnen and beside Lake Thun."

Wolf did as he was told and began to read, and Martin, having lit a cigar, lay back into the brown shadows and fell to dreaming of his new work, until the murmuring sound of Wolf's voice sent him to sleep.

Never again did he discuss himself with anybody: introspection and self-dissection were not proper to him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE next morning Martin was himself again, spruce, well-brushed, and handsome. The night had been passed in pleasant slumber. At ten o'clock he sat down again to continue his work of the day before. He worked all day. That evening he rolled about on a couch unable to find repose. He was exhausted. The following morning he rose dazed, and, scarcely troubling to eat, went straight to his writing. Again he wrote all day and part of the night. For two months he wrote incessantly, taking hardly any sleep, eating when he could reach food with his hand, and put it into his mouth without thinking. His eyes became glazed and he spoke to nobody. Wolf kept his friends away from the villa, and had the pleasure of warning Sophie not to come near the place, as Martin would not see her. For two months Martin refrained from human intercourse, for two months the trees of the forests saw nothing of him; his spare moments were spent upon his bed, which he had had carried into the art study, the rest of the day in dreaming and putting down notes.

His nights were passed in exhausted sleep full of dreams and visions. Frequently he found himself lying upon a black rock at the bottom of a well

of flames a thousand feet high. They flared upward from under the rock like long vermilion grass and went higher than he could imagine into the cold air of night. He lay awake in the dark and watched them around him, straight up like walls, moving like the swift ground under an express train, but always perpendicular. He had the sensation of being pale and white, and of feeling his body with pity. He was sorry for himself. He raised his head a little and the flames vanished, the cold night came round him and he shivered. He wanted the blessed flaring upwards to begin again, to charm away the still, horrible silence of the room. He lay down again, and no sooner was he comfortable than an irresistible thought came to him, and he was forced to get out of his bed, turn on the electric light, and, blinking with the glare, sit down at his table and write until the light had become pale in the flooding sunshine of morning. Time passed rapidly. Three hours were like three minutes, and at the end of a day he could not understand why he felt so exhausted, because it seemed to him that he had neither made an effort nor worked hard.

Sometimes he fell asleep at his writing-table about two o'clock in the afternoon ; sometimes he would look for Wolf, and sit in his company without saying a word until Wolf became morbid and felt creepy. Sometimes he rushed to his library and, taking twenty books of the most varied description, would lie upon his bed looking at them. Books of

pictures he particularly favoured, but also books of travel, catalogues, dictionaries, and biographies. Poetry he did not read. It might be said that he had never read a word of poetry. What he found in those books one cannot say: mere words, mere sights, mere isolated sentences probably caught his eye and stimulated his imagination. Kaulbach's illustrations of Goethe's works pleased him. He would sit for hours looking minutely into the engraved photograph facsimiles. Whether he found rest in the carefully drawn pictures of heroines, complete with the most accurate accessories, or whether he found romance in the beautiful young women and the god-like young men, it is impossible to judge. He gazed most frequently upon the representation of a princess playing chess. The young man standing in the shadow of the curtains with his arms folded seemed to him a prince. He adored the shepherd in the second plate, pursuing the angry shepherdess, and the lovesick Dorothea embracing her lover in the vineyard. His mind was entranced and delighted with the completeness and quality of the whole volume of plates. He had no idea to what the pictures referred; he never read the text accompanying them, much less the works of Goethe. Each picture for him was a story, wonderful and perfectly satisfactory. Probably he did not know bad art from good, certainly he would have found Greek vases detestable: representations of voluptuous nature, bright colours, beautiful finish, this was his idea of what pleased

the eye. Probably he himself was able to supply all the elemental necessities of his music, the balance and the restraint, and looked to outside things for an idea of technical finish, of natural beauty and romance.

Kaulbach's pictures satisfied some need; he got from them something perfectly necessary. Poetry or high art would probably have surfeited him, he found no need to seek expression of those things in admiration, he neither knew nor did not know that his work, as he put it down, possessed certain qualities. He was not conscious whether it answered the requirements of the most exalted art. Never having considered these things he knew nothing about them. His one idea was a slow upward motion bursting at the end into a million falls. Like the clear picture of the finished production, the idea remained in his head the whole of the two months. One day he worked for twenty hours, till the whole of his blood seemed to be breaking away out of his body. At the end of that time he finished the end of his last idea, and sat for some minutes in dazed silence.

Suddenly, in spite of his haggard appearance, a look of youth came over his face, and leaping up he went into the forest. He went a long way, and at the end lay down and slept. Joy filled him. He slept in the midst of joy. The first terrible and great effort towards a fine work had been made—the conception had become an infant. He had it now in his arms, as it were. Without considering the days

ahead of him, he lay under the pines in the satisfaction of a glorious accomplishment.

The following day Martin spent in tying together his sheets of manuscript, and in making delicate corrections with the most careful writing. His writing as a rule was horrible, but he made those corrections in a hand as beautiful as a child's in its tenth year. Afterwards, with pleasure as childish as his writing, he cut out the superfluous portions of Werner's poem with brackets of red ink. With a feeling akin to sacrilege, that he enjoyed very much, he made marks on Werner's manuscript. He never marked books; he thought it a useless habit, and had not personally sufficient courage to do it. He made two holes in the side of his papers and threaded through them a piece of scarlet ribbon off an old box of sweets. He then with care put the manuscript of words upon the top of them, and tied them round with some string. The accumulated mass of rubbish on his table covered with scribbles, sketches, blots, and false starts he swept on to the floor, and putting the bundle of papers in a special drawer, rang for his valet. When the man appeared, he said, "Tidy the room."

Then he went into the outer room and, calling to Wolf, who thought that his life would end in the silence of that house, surprised him by shouting, "Order me the car: I am going to Berlin."

CHAPTER XXIX

HE drove straight to the house of the Countess von Ardstein. She was fortunately in.

" My dear," she cried, as he ran to embrace her, " how delightful to see you ; how ill you look."

" I do not feel ill," answered Martin, kissing her again. " I have come to tell you good news."

For some reason unknown to herself she was startled. She put up her hand in apprehension, and stood for a second held by a fear.

" What is it ? " she asked, and looked round at an old family portrait for the sake of companionship.

Martin unbuttoned his great-coat, with the Astrakhan collar, and from the inner breast pocket produced the tidy packet of white papers. His heart seemed to dance all over him as he held it out to her. She did not take it, but looked at him. He appeared to be laughing.

" Take it," he said ; " it is the idea of my new opera ; it is ancient and new and sacred to me "

The Countess understood why she had been frightened. The news was evidently something out of the way and terrifying.

"It is yours for twenty-four hours," he said; "at the end of that time I am going back to my home."

Up till then his house in the Black Forest had never been considered as a home.

She untied the string, staring at him, and repeated twice: "My dearest."

"Don't lose the leaves of the written portion; I have a very great sentiment about it." Martin evidently did not consider the notation of the music as written.

Countess von Ardstein burst into tears. She had no reason for crying except a sensation of amazement. Martin had never had a very great sentiment about anything before. That, however, was not what caused her to weep, but she remarked it. The room seemed filled with a peculiar kind of smoke, and a soundless vibration hit against her ears, as of one shouting so slowly as to cause no actual noise. She had the same feeling as a distant spectator suffers between the sight of an axe striking upon a tree and the hearing of the sound of the blow. She took a lace handkerchief out of a flowered ribbon bag and wiped her thin nose. Her lorgnon caught in her sleeve as she raised her arm, and tore a bit off a lace frill.

She looked very old suddenly to Martin: at least seventy years old, and he, on the contrary, felt eighteen.

"What is the matter?" he said tenderly.

"My dear boy," answered the Countess with a

vulgar sniff, " I do not know. I think you are extraordinary. Last time I saw you with your mistress you were a gay man of the world. I could have some fun with you. Now, my dear lad, you remind one of a genius."

The Countess had not, to her knowledge, seen a genius, but she spoke as if they were a class which she inspected from time to time.

" Well, read it," said Martin after a minute, in some irritation, " even if you sit up all night, and afterwards speak to nobody of it, unless it is to Hirchner. Read it, get somebody to play it, play it yourself. I am going to Sophie. To-morrow night at this time I will call for it."

He disappeared. Countess von Ardstein sat up all night obediently.

Martin himself went to Sophie's house. She was giving a dinner party. He ordered the servant to show him into the dining-room. There everybody sat feasting. Several people rose as he entered, and cried, " Hoch ! there is Martin Schüler."

Sophie, whose back was towards the door, jumped up in a passion of irrational fright. Martin, still buttoned up in his great-coat, came a step into the room. Sophie put down her napkin, and with the other hand pulled the skirt of her dress a little out of the way of her feet, and with a graceful and sudden movement ran towards him, and put her arm round his neck.

She kissed him and began making small noises not unlike a cat.

" You delicious creature!" he murmured. Her physical movements always enraptured him.

"What are you doing here?" she asked; "what?"

He led her to the table, and taking the chair next to her, which had been vacated by a charming young man of twenty, sat down beside her and held her hands.

" I have come to Berlin for one night," he answered.

" How pale you are," she said, looking at his face, still frightened. " Why, you are completely changed. The look in your eyes is quite changed. My dearest Martin—I do not believe that is your name." The young man who had vacated the chair, and who was standing behind it, leant a little forward and said :

" It is nice to see you again, Herr Schüler. Berlin has lost something by your departure."

Martin looked up at him, and the young man felt extremely foolish and small. The look of openness and power in Schüler's face made him take a step back.

Sophie pressed his hands, and asked him whether he was glad to see her, and he whispered that he would be glad to see her alone. By some means she made a sign to Count von Hansen, and got him to whisper to the guests that their early departure would be tactful. As dinner was at an end, they rose and silently went out of the room.

Sophie began to tremble, and said :

" What is it, Martin, what is it ? "

"Nothing," said Martin, taking her in his arms. "Let us go to bed; I want you."

In the middle of the night he said:

"I am never coming back to Berlin; I am going to work at my villa; I am probably going to work for years. You will come to me when you feel inclined, will you not?"

Sophie stroked his face and kissed him. She was not frightened of him any longer—the renewal of their former relationship had taken away her fear; on the contrary, she felt that he was making a demand upon her and asking something that he was half afraid he would not get. Like many women whose minds are not very great, she imagined that persons who asked things of her were less than she.

"My dear," she said therefore, "I will always be near you when you want me."

He fell asleep, but she turned herself over and over, and failed to understand the curious lightness of her body. She seemed to be a skin filled with air. The truth was that her melodramatic fright of the evening having been dissipated, she now for the first time completely ceased to fear Martin, and with the end of her fear came the end of her passion. She liked brutes of men, and was not addicted to looking after little boys. The sentiments attached to the thought of being the faithful mistress of the strange man beside her were strong enough however to make her willing to go to that villa in the forest and look after him from time to time. The compensating joy of proprietorship

almost made up for the lost joy of being passionately desired. Thus Sophie approached as near as she was able to the tranquil pleasures of marriage.

The next day Martin ordered her to come with him to the Black Forest. In the evening they got in his car and drove to the house of the Countess von Ardstein. Martin left Sophie outside, and ran upstairs in his overcoat without a hat as he had done the evening before.

The Countess was in. She looked as if she had been crying all night. He went up to her and, feeling extremely uneasy, said, " Well ? " and put out his hand.

She put out her hands and, gathering herself together, went up to him and shook her head in amazement. He laughed and repeated " Well ? " She went back to a table, and took the papers out of a drawer. They were still in immaculate order. She seemed to be trying to speak. He had never seen her moved with feeling before. He was very self-conscious.

He took the papers from her and buttoned them in his coat. To the Countess five minutes seemed to have elapsed since he gave them to her.

He put a bitter expression on his face and said with a cynical smile :

" Well, are they not good ? "

" Do not ask," said the Countess, making a pitiful face at him, and again turning away.

He walked after her, and took her by the shoulders.

" You know ! " he cried roughly, turning her round. " I command you to speak to me."

" Wonderful," she gasped.

He took her in his arms and kissed her a thousand times.

" I trust you," he said, and left her. He went away without turning back, and she stood in the middle of the room dumbfounded with her good fortune.

CHAPTER XXX

IN the year nineteen hundred and thirteen Martin Schüler fell ill. The strain and anxiety of his work upon the opera had brought him to such a state of ill-health that he was unable to bear the cold weather of the winter. He fell ill in January. He had spent the day roaming about the forest, where everything was as silent as death, where everything was covered with the white, hard snow. In the morning he set out across the lake, where the snow lay in one white clean sheet. His foot sank in it at every step, but with monotonous going forward he crossed to the far side. The long string of his footmarks lay behind him. He left the open and went in under the trees, where the ground was bare of snow except small patches. There had not been enough to cover the trees, and the ground beneath them. Small drifts ran up to the trees here and there. He had expected the forest to be warm: it was cold with a coldness that ate into his heart. He became absolutely cold. He had expected it to be sheltering and friendly: it was silent, still, and strange. The whole of the world was dead. He wandered aimlessly and miserably about without thought, without hope,

without will. The peahens were one effort from completion. He could not make it. For two months he had been unable to add a single phrase to his opera ; for two months he had been as empty of genius as other men ; he was merely a corpse, barely sustained by life. He put his hand out to touch the trees, but they were cold ; he stooped to touch the ground, but it was cold as the grave. The warm soft smell that he had expected was not there among those boughs. He had come out for understanding and companionship but found none. The people indoors were of no use to him. There they sat like painted figures, and did not in the least understand how empty and how exhausted he was. He was more exhausted to-day than he had ever been in the whole of those long four years. After every effort of a few days he had lived weeks in stupid, blind indifference, broken by a craving to be physically violent and by fierce childish tempers. To-day he had no desire for anger, no desire to hurt and kill ; even the desire to break the bonds of human limitations that had maddened him to rage in his former long days of misery did not strike him. He felt weary and his head was full of a sickness and of a dull eternal pain ; to himself he seemed surrounded by a nauseating flat stretch of mud to which there was no limit. His eyes were blank, his brows lowered upon them in a frown, his nostrils contracted, and his face sucked in at the cheeks. Sometimes he opened and shut his mouth, as if he had a taste of something upon his lips. He was

both hopeless and degenerate, he had lost his look of strength, and wore instead a childish look of wretchedness and despair. He had come out without an overcoat. He stood as long as twenty minutes at a time, examining nothing, with his eyes towards the ground. As the day advanced the sky became more leaden and the frost more keen. Nothing moved. It seemed as if the world were very close up under the clouds, and had ceased to go round. The long black and white landscape, in which everything seemed wooden, small, and close at hand, was mere long white ridges of snow and black patches of trees. The trees were so black that only where they stood isolated from the mass of the forest could their forms be distinguished. Towards three o'clock, about the time when the sun would have set, Martin came out again upon the lake in a gloomy place where the trees grew close down to the edge. A few flakes of snow fell slowly down out of the sky; few, silent, and steady; they seemed more inevitable than death, more weird and foreboding than the howl of wolves, more sinister than ravens. He walked a few steps out upon the snow-covered ice, and heard a long, thin, siren cry of the wind vibrating upon the taut frozen air. The snowflakes gathered around him. He could still see the locality of his home : towards this he began to walk. The snowflakes thickened, the wind veered round a quarter of the compass, and came from due north. It quickened. The siren cries from behind him ceased and the wind blew

up into his face. It was bitterly cold, colder than before. The snow hit his face like wool and suffocated him; with his hands up before him, he struggled through the thick drowning snowflakes towards the villa. No step seemed to bring him any nearer; he thought he was in the same place, lifting his feet up and down.

At last, after an hour, he found himself at the further bank, and turning instinctively to the right presently came to his little landing stage.

The inside of the house was warm and pleasant; a log fire glowed, the lamps were lit, and everything was prepared for the evening. To Martin it looked strange. The fire seemed without animation, the lamp to be flat and not the author of the light. Sophie in her long soft scarlet gown made by Madame Lucile, her cheeks red with the heat of the fire, her eyes and her sapphire rings black and sparkling, seemed a painted image. Wolf in his tweed jacket and flannel trousers looked like a husband in a play. Their clothes seemed as out of keeping with reality as stage clothes usually do.

"Those two have had a quarrel," said Martin to himself; "why does the wife dress herself above her station?"

Suddenly they both looked up at him where he stood, wet, pale, and shivering. They ran to him; Sophie embraced him in spite of her beautiful dress. He was taken to the fire, kissed, petted, scolded, and given hot coffee. His clothes were taken off, and Sophie wrapped him in a soft warm rug.

" I would like my bed in here," he said.

In ten minutes he found himself lying in the middle of a wonderful warmth, staring at Sophie and at Wolf. What were they doing ? How did Sophie know when milk was boiling, or the right way to put the sheets ? She must be his mother. Yes, that was it, she was his mother. She sat staring into the fire all night so it seemed to him, always in her red dress : all night or a hundred nights, he could not tell which.

Up and down his mind surged. His hands became larger than his body. The people in the room became as small as pins. He had an idea that he was staring into a doll's house where everything was strong-coloured and perfectly clear. All the objects in the room were focused as if seen in a diminishing glass ; each stood out clear and separate. Martin's eyes had the glazed look of fever : the softness of his surroundings had gone with the softness of his eyes.

In the middle of a night he called to Sophie and Wolf, and asked them whether they thought he was going to die. He himself was convinced of it. He told them exactly how terrible he felt, how lonely and deserted. His tongue seemed to be loosed by fever.

" And," he added, " not all your kindness, not all that you can do, nothing that you can think of stirs in me the slightest feeling. I do not care for you, I feel nothing pass from you to me. I want to find somebody to gather me who is stronger than

I am. I want somebody to take me and hold me upon their arms and make me happy. I want to be held in the dark warm arms of somebody omnipotent, who will drive away all these ghosts. I used to think that mothers were like that when I was a little boy. Do you know, I used to cry when I found my mother was not omnipotent, not all-loving and all-forgiving."

Sophie leant over him and stroked his hair.

" No," he said, " it is no good—I am stronger than you. I want to be taken away out of myself and put to sleep. I am a barrier, I am on the outside, and I know nobody who can keep the wind from howling down my back. The abyss is just behind me and all of you are pushing me into it. If only I could die. I am dying, I am sure I am dying, I am sinking into softness. Sophie and Wolf, I am going down ! "

CHAPTER XXXI

FOR nearly five months Martin lay in his bed in a weak state, half between sleep and wakefulness. He slept nearly the whole of the time. Several times he tried to convince Wolf that he was about to die. He had never been ill before. Sophie believed him, and lived in a continual series of frights until she began to see that he knew nothing about himself and was getting better.

His personality during the whole of his illness seemed large, vague, and shadowy. He seemed to spread out over the whole house, and to loom up like a large shadow cast by a candle on a wall. Wolf liked nursing him, and so did Sophie after a fashion ; she had never done anything useful before. They neither of them dreamed for a moment of letting a professional nurse into the house.

One day in May, Sophie sat sewing at the window ; she had put on a beautiful white muslin dress with frills edged with dark blue thread. She never failed to look as exquisite as if she were attending a ball. Upon the back of her chair hung a large leghorn hat with dark blue silk ribbons. She clothed herself well, partly to please Martin, and partly because she

could not help it. From time to time she put down her sewing and looked out across the lake. The water was black and still as a mirror, and the day calm and beautiful.

Sophie sighed. She was thirty years old. There were still ten years of good life before her. Life in that villa, in spite of her real devotion to Martin, did not agree with her. Frequently she walked to the other side of the lake to stare at it, and to stare at its reflexion ; when she had stared she came back and sat down in it. That was as near as she ever got to deep philosophical thinking, to asking the question of her existence. She sat sewing an undergarment more to kill time than because she liked it. She was herself in the villa, and she did not like it. In Berlin she manufactured herself out of the attitude of the many people around her, and out of events. Here she was without people and nothing ever happened. She was not very clever at conjuring something out of nothing.

Martin turned over and spoke to her.

" What a pretty sight Sophie is."

" Am I, dear one ? "

" Yes."

Silence fell again. They had not been on very good terms lately. Such terms as can exist between an ill man and a well woman had not been altogether pleasant. One of them found the other a little tiresome. It was impossible to say which.

Martin spoke again.

" Sweet Sophie, am I very ugly ? "

" No, of course not."

" Do you care for me? "

Sophie put down her sewing and came to him. She was moved. She bent over him and played with him. He seemed a child although it was thirty-four years since he had been born. Presently he fell asleep and again silence fell over the room. Sophie wanted a friend, she wanted to see some other creature than the sentimental secretary, who never let her do any of those things she thought essential in moments of crisis.

She went to the window. She could see Wolf in the garden tending a little rockery of Alpine plants, which he had put together to pass the hours, when there were no letters to be written and no battles to be met. Wolf never fought a battle against Martin; he only endeavoured to keep his feet. He was smoking a pipe and Sophie despised him. His conversation bored her terribly. It was one long reminiscence. The poor man had found nothing new to talk about for four years. The only years of his life worth living seemed to have been those passed at Cambridge. The unutterable stupidity of most of his actions there made her feel white inside. She had no sense of the ordinary, the normal, and the everyday. Wolf was ordinary and everyday. His position in regard to Martin was from his point of view a wonderful piece of luck. Actually it was a calamity, it killed his personal life. He sat in the grass of the garden, which was hardly yet green with spring, holding an Alpine plant diction-

ary. She saw him crawl on his knees and inspect a gentian, finger a flowering moss, stroke a saxifrage. He was able to put his knowledge to no use ; he was writing a little book on rock plants for amateurs, with coloured photographic plates made by himself.

Sophie got up, went out of the garden window, and crossed the grass to the corner where Wolf and the chauffeurs had created a false moraine. She wished to see the gentian. She bent down beside Wolf and said :

" How are your flowers ? "

Wolf looked up in delight. His labours had so far passed unnoticed except by his subordinates. He answered :

" Very well, thank you. Look at the beautiful spiked petals of this gentian. It is a new kind from a man I know at Schaffhausen. He makes expeditions into the Alps for the originals."

" Can you not see him, alpenstock and all ? " cried Sophie, " with fish basket and pressing book, like the caricatures in Simplicissimus ! Picture one—he sets out, bids farewell to gross wife and family ; picture two—the edelweiss, and so on. Of course he falls down a crevasse in the end."

Wolf laughed. His friend at Schaffhausen was only an horticultural correspondent : he had never seen him. When Wolf chuckled he sniggered and shook all over because he was not at all accustomed to doing it.

" Do you ever pick them ? " said Sophie.

" That would be a very great shame," he replied; " the plant is very delicate."

She felt a little sentimental this afternoon, probably because the air was warm and full of the tired feelings of spring. She said :

" Does he care for flowers ? "

" I do not know. He used to have them at Berlin."

They looked at one another, and Sophie laughed.

" There we two have been here for so long and do not know any little thing about him. Could we not dig up that blue thing and put it in a pot ? " She felt very affectionate towards Martin and wanted to pay him delicate attentions.

Wolf was delighted. He went indoors for a bowl and quickly made a little rockery of glacier chips and sand in it for the gentian.

Sophie held it up to her face and said :

" It is very pretty."

Like children they carried it indoors. Martin was awake.

" Will this amuse you? " said Wolf, bending over him ; " we thought you might care for it."

Sophie thought it was kind of Wolf to include her in his speech.

Martin took it eagerly with a boyish gesture. " How beautiful," he said, " how beautiful. I believe if I could lie in the midst of flowers I should recover. I have always been accustomed to flowers. There are never any here in this house."

He put the bowl beside his pillow and lay on his

side for hours inspecting the very intricate arrangement of the plant.

"This is better than one finds in Switzerland," he said.

"It is an horticultural creation," answered Wolf.

Later on he said that the colour of the blue filled his throat with something and that he felt madly happy inside. He never wished to see anything to do with music again; he wanted to lie in the garden and be happy. He thought the gentian reminded him of his favourite Rudi: he loved everything Rudi loved—Babette, the cat, mountain climbing, chamois hunting, and the glacier of the Jungfrau. He could see it now like a pale blue clouded emerald glistening in her bosom. He had seen the Jungfrau at night like a folded veil in the sky, pure white in the moonlight, and in the shadows the colours of the night sky. He kept the gentian pot close to his eyes, for by half shutting his eyes he could turn the bits of Alpine rock into peaks and the cracks between them into ravines. There was one like the Matterhorn. He thought he saw Grindelwald below him, over the edge of his eye, as if he were lying down upon a rock high above it and looking over.

Sophie watched him.

"What are you playing at?" she said after a long time of silence.

"My dearest," said Martin looking round, "come and look at the Matterhorn."

He made her bend over him, and put her eye down by the pot. She could faintly see the mountain.

" You darling child," she said, suddenly overcome with a revelation of understanding, " you darlingkin, you Martin ! "

" Am I your child ? " Martin turned over towards her—" am I ? "

" Yes," she answered, smothering him with kisses, " you are the dearest in the world."

He pulled himself up under her arms, and let his cheek lie in the warmness of her neck.

He began to talk again.

" How small everything is, and lovely ; how soft like the little birds. You smell sweetly to me like the sweetest honey. Your skin is soft like little birds' feathers. I think you are my nest, my mother, my charming mother." He pushed his face closer into her arms and sighed. " Am I too old and rough to love all your faithfulness to me ? How patient you have been, how good. I would like to put flowers round your hair. Darling Sophie, I am thirty-four : am I too old to feel the sweetness of love ? I never knew anything so sweet and pretty as your breath. I will never be cruel to you again ; I will always love you most tenderly, my little lamb. Tell me I am your little one too."

" You are my little one."

" But "—Martin moved in the bed—" I must finish those peahens. My peahens must be finished. Your little boy is lost without them."

" You shall, you shall," cried Sophie, who was full of tears. All the shortcomings of her life were being forgiven. " You shall indeed finish them."

"When?" he cried, "when? I must know."

Sophie looked wildly up for inspiration.

"Next year," she answered, "in the spring."

Martin believed her. He lay down in bed again, and, turning over, went to sleep with her hand in his.

CHAPTER XXXII

MARTIN SCHÜLER gradually recovered from his illness and began to go about again. His health continued to be bad; he suffered from his old pains in the stomach and from a weakness of the heart, brought on by so much leaning forward over a writing-table. He always wrote with the edge of the writing-table pressed against his breast below his heart.

He looked old and sallow and slow. His figure had lost its beautiful grace. He seemed less tall and thicker. His vitality seemed to have gone altogether. Through the summer he wrote scarcely anything at all, and never said a word about his opera.

He finished and elaborated a little army of songs and boudoir pieces from ideas that had fallen off the peahens, and wrote, in imitation of the successive masters, a musical revue which he called "Bachravellianstücke." "Bachravellianstücke" had a great vogue. It was certainly brilliantly clever. His little army sold well and was edited in various Albums which were given to the young to get to Parnassus upon.

Sophie frequently went to Berlin, and he seemed

uneasy when she was away, although he never said that he missed her. It probably never occurred to him that he had not everything he wanted. Wolf read to him every evening; he read the "Ice Maiden" of Hans Andersen seven times and "The Cossacks" twice. Martin liked "The Cossacks." He shared the forest feeling and the charm of the large beautiful heroine in the pink shirt with the hero. He thought the pink shirt must be pleated in a thousand pleats with a pale green edge. Frequently he was moody and ill-humoured, but Wolf was blind to everything in his master but his divinity. The large divinity of Martin filled the whole forest, just as Wolf's small divinity had once filled a small circle round his head. Wolf's adoration for him was beyond the reach of thought. When he sailed upon the lake alone in his skiff, Wolf stood on the shore like a dog watching him the whole of the time. He would see him lean over and look down into the water for his Ice Maiden, and he knew he was seeking inspiration. The water was clear upon the surface and dark and green below. Frequently Wolf feared he would fall over the edge of the boat and drown.

Sometimes Martin went by himself into the woods, as in the old times. He was quiet by himself, and melancholy; he hardly thought at all, and wandered among the trees with the quiet resignation of a monk. They showered their silver light upon him as he walked below in the dark and beautiful

green shadows. He used most frequently to go to those parts of the forest where the trees were very old and tall, where their sumptuous boughs hid the sky in a heaven of green clouds. Here the romances of the world seemed to have come together, the ghosts of all the fairies and lovers that had ever lived. Adam's form of red clay stole softly with an ivory Eve about the tall pillars of the trees—Venus herself, marble and everlasting, surrounded by a thousand Cupids like the dream of Titian held herself upon a rock under the canopy of pines. All the Pans, shepherds, fauns, and nymphs of men's innumerable thoughts passed riotously by after a Dionysius. Fairies and heroes, princes and princesses, and every happy and more romantic form of imaginary being, could be seen there riding down the glades.

Martin stood upon a knoll and watched them. He was looking for his prince and his romantic notions in the past, but they all lay in his own manuscript awaiting the last act of creation: unborn and in the future.

Day followed day, and all the time he waited in a negative and hopeless state that was neither happy nor unhappy for some unforeseen event to come down upon him like golden rain, and fill him with a blind, raging energy.

CHAPTER XXXIII

COUNTESS VON SEBALTZ took a house in Munich, and at this house she determined to make Martin pass the winter. She utterly refused to live at Tittersee, cut off from the world in a forest of snow.

One afternoon when November had come again she sat dreaming in front of the fire in the sympathetic art study of the villa. The fire glowed upon her lovely violet dress, and cast her shadow upon the ceiling, large and dark. Martin was standing at the window humming an indefinite melancholy song. Outside, the first snow of winter was beginning to fall thin and slow over a black landscape. It was almost dark.

Presently Martin turned and looked at her. His satisfaction in the colour of her dress gave him a moment's happiness; a gleam shot through him and faded away. He came forward and touched the silk. She seemed more wonderful to him than she had ever done in all her days. Since the moment of his convalescence, when he had depended upon her, she had become for him something quite extraordinary and different from before. Once he had loved her because her gaiety and beauty

had been the gaiety and beauty that were necessary to him. When he no longer wanted any of those things, but deep understanding, he had found nothing in her. He did not cease to love her after a fashion because any change of emotion in the terror and agony of creation had never occurred to him. After his tenderness towards her during his recovery he had created for himself something new in her. She had accepted it and allowed it. It was not beyond her power. He loved tenderly, without passion, for the first time in his life; for the first time in her life she had been tenderly loved by somebody who depended upon her. As far as she was able she appreciated it. Frequently he raged at her, but his rage had lost the terrifying vividness of his former rages. He no longer flashed lightning at her and made her think he was insane.

To-day he touched her silk dress and loved her. She was considering how she could induce him to leave Tittersee, for she understood that if he were to fall ill there she would not be able to stay away. She was too conventional to desert him, and not strong enough to shift the burden he had put upon her off her shoulders, and yet the thought of the next winter was as hateful to her as the thought of hell. She turned sick at the idea, and her whole body felt unutterably weary with the uneasy fear of another long imprisonment.

The magnificent house in Munich was already furnished and the fires every day burnt brightly on the hearth ready for his reception. Aired

linen was already laid upon the bed and flowers put on the table.

Martin threw himself at her feet, and, laying his head in her lap, began crying for nothing, like a child. She began to stroke his hair and the back of his neck where his brain ended ; she could see the movements of his shoulders under his coat. She put her hand on his coat : it was warm and rough and entirely opposed to all the silken smoothness of her own personal life. Becoming sentimental, she thought of all the differences she knew between men and women ; they were not many, but on the other hand she did not recognize any likenesses. Men and women were therefore utterly different for her upon a few generalizations. She pitied Martin ; she was convinced that the peahens were waste paper, that his work was a failure, and that there was absolutely nothing in the idea. She had not the least glimmering of understanding of anything except of the management of men and of social success.

She began to talk to him as if she were telling him a story.

" I have taken a house in Munich. It is furnished and warm. There is a big room there with blue silk curtains and a fire. It is a very fine house, the kind of house I know that you will like. You will feel comfortable and happy and better there. Perhaps the peahens are there, perhaps they are perching on the walls waiting for you."

Martin put his arms round her waist and looked

up at her. He shook his head miserably from side to side and said:

"But, no, they have gone a very long way away from me. They have altogether flown away to the moon, or to Jupiter."

"It is comfortable and warm," repeated Sophie; "my Martinkin, let your small Sophie show it to you."

Their intimacy had not failed to produce familiar conversation between them.

"My small girl," said Martin affectionately, "I will come and have a look at it."

Sophie had the sense not to move immediately: she fingered the frown upon his forehead, and wiped his tears with her handkerchief.

"My ancientkin must come with me and let Sophie show it to you; it would please her so much."

She continued to play with his face. He kissed her fingers.

"Describe it again," he said, "and I will think about it."

"It is in the Königstrasse. From the balcony of your room you can see the Palace. The bedroom is a small room at one end; I had it made gold and pale blue for you, because you like bright colours."

Martin rose; warmth seemed to have come into his life; he felt a desire for luxury; the art study seemed dirty and worn.

"Get my coat," he said; "I will go."

Sophie ran and told the chauffeur, who was

drinking coffee in the kitchen, to get the car. She ran into the kitchen herself. Everything had been prepared for two days for instantaneous departure; she knew how much a moment's delay might mean to her arrangements. She ran to her room and put on a small cherry-coloured hat with a cherry-coloured sparrow in flight upon the top. When she heard the car she flung herself into an ermine coat, and, screaming at the valet, hurried him down with Martin's black felt hat and large military coat.

In a minute she ran down herself, and, creating purposely an air of excitement, bustled Martin into the car. They got in. The snow was now falling fast. The car moved away from the house and soon turned into the road to Munich. When the white Rolls-Royce had slipped away from sight Wolf put the mass of luggage upon the old Mercedes to follow after.

When the car had got well past the railway station, Martin put his hand on Sophie's and said:

"I know what it was that I suffered from. That house was too small to finish the peahens in."

With that the car sank slowly down to Munich out of the cold world of snow and pine trees and black winds.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE house in the Königstrasse was a marvel of simple beauty, such as the French and Viennese alone understand. It was furnished without the aid of any art furnishing company. Here, in a lofty room, large enough for a queen's antechamber, decorated with stately curtains of blue silk and beautiful plaster moulding, furnished with a vast polished wood writing-table, an orange brocade divan, several chairs, and a full sized grand piano, Count von Schüler finished his best and most beautiful work. That winter he had received the Nobel prize, because the world thought his day was over, and that having brought gay happiness to millions of human beings, he deserved the reward for benefiting mankind. The Emperor gave him a Countship, partly to thank the Swedish nation, and to show that he himself patronized the arts. The change of place and the accident of public honour had a great effect upon him, as it frequently has upon sensitive people.

All of the past four years Martin Schüler left behind him at his villa by the lake; he took away nothing with him except the manuscripts of the peahens. For the first weeks that he spent

in his new and beautiful home he sat still and silent, seeing nobody but his secretary and his friend, and going out infrequently to look at the city. At the end of three weeks he roused himself, hired a music secretary and a copyist, and began to make the final effort necessary to the accomplishment of his task. He sat at work for weeks together. His health got worse every day, but every day as the years fell upon him—for in a week he lived a twelvemonth—he became more calm, more dispassionate, patient, and kind. He sat steadily writing and gazing into the past. His creative intellect was at rest; his selective intellect, his extraordinary technical powers which throughout all his work had been amazing, and his memory, alone were at work. He wrote entirely from the memory of his dreams, and from the copy of those visionless thoughts that in the past years had with pain and labour expressed themselves under his hand. The vision of his peahens was far-off and dark, as if reflected in the water of the lake, but he had not the slightest difficulty in perceiving it, in hearing those few sounds that he still wished to hear. He worked with a sense of co-ordination and of artistic balance, he was making of his absolute genius a perfect and supreme expression. Throughout the days of his creation he had thought mainly of the life, yet always of the form. When the form lay ready under his hands for the last compression, he thought mainly of the form, yet always of the life. As before the form had been continuously

before his eyes, so now the life was continually in his mind.

Everything was smooth and easy, for the selective power was one of those gifts with which he had been born.

In March he sat for another three weeks doing nothing but stare into the fire, and from time to time call to the secretaries. They came frequently and showed him copies of the score. He would not allow a blemish or a correction to spoil those sheets. They thought him very fussy and tiresome. For three weeks he sat and shuddered by the fire, wrapped up in a rug with a large cat upon his knees. He shuddered, not from cold but from weakness and fatigue. Wolf had found the cat straying upon the stairs, and Martin had appropriated it. Wolf wanted the cat himself as a pet, but he gave it up to Martin, whom he felt that he had lost altogether that winter.

At the end of this time, Martin's chief secretary came to him with a clean bundle of manuscript and said, "That is all, Herr Count."

Martin wrote his name upon the first and last sheets and ordered him to ring the bell. When the footman appeared, he said, "Tell all to come."

While they were coming he took from his pocket Werner's old manuscript and his own first draft that he had made five years before in the villa. He had a vision of the villa standing upon the March snows among the trees of the forest like an empty box.

The servants all appeared, following Wolf and Sophie, who thought that he must be going to die.

There he sat with the cat upon his knees, looking quite different from his former self—gentle, kind, and simple. When Sophie came to him he took her hands, and, looking down at his manuscript, which was beside him on a chair, said, "It is finished."

An emotion carried her away, and, communicating itself to Wolf, left them both speechless and still.

Martin evidently did not notice it.

He turned his head to the servants and said in slow and emotional tones, "I have finished my work to-day; do you all finish yours and take a holiday. May you all be blessed."

The butler smiled at the footman, shrugged his shoulders, and looked at the chef. They knew perfectly well that to forsake the house all at once for a day's joy was impossible.

In a minute Martin said:

"And now I want the car; I want to go to the photographer's; I want to go out to a café; and do you, cook, make me a feast for Friday for twenty persons."

He took Sophie and Wolf with him in the car, and carried the cat in his arms, who, with sleepy superiority, was not in the least affected by anything that went on.

After visiting a photographer's they went to tea at a new and fashionable café, where everybody stared at them, and particularly at Sophie, who wore

as usual the most beautiful clothes. After this they went to an exhibition of paintings in a curious black and white gallery, where each picture was hung in a panel of fluted grey silk. Before some were little statuettes upon white wooden pedestals, before others painted wooden flowers in painted wooden bowls. A peasant Madonna had imitation candles dripping simulated wax on each side of her.

Martin liked this exhibition; he thought it extraordinary that people could do such wonderful things, for it was years since he had seen anything of the kind.

Upon Friday night he gave a dinner party, to which he invited from Berlin the Countess von Ardstein, Hirchner, and Konstanz, together with many of his old friends. To his great joy his photographs came back at five o'clock, and he spent an hour fussing over their choice, and tying them up with white paper and ribbons to give to his guests. He made the cook tell him all there was to eat, and the butler all there was to drink. He ordered a grotesque amount of flowers and tokens of sweets from the best shops.

That night, at the beginning of dinner, he presented the finished score of his peahens formally to Sophie, who publicly kissed it amongst a thousand hand-shakes, glass-raisings, and compliments. Everybody was ecstatic over the photographs.

"Am I not a magnificent old fellow?" cried

Martin. The guests all agreed, and his long health was drunk.

"May you live for ever and ever," cried Sophie with dramatic feeling, and everybody echoed, "Yes, for ever and ever, our immortal singer."

They cried this rather because they loved him, and because the atmosphere suggested it, than because they at all suspected what the peahens were like.

CHAPTER XXXV

ON June 1st, 1914, Martin Schüler's opera was produced at the Berlin Opera House.

It is remarkable that it was exactly the right length. It needed no adaptation or disembowelling to speak of. All his friends were wild about it; the actors, the orchestra, the scene-shifters, although they did not understand it any more than his friends, caught the enthusiasm. Perhaps Hirchner and the Countess von Ardstein alone had an idea of what it meant.

Count von Schüler was present at the First Night. He sat in a box hung with laurels and roses. His hair was oiled, his hollow cheeks and rigid jaws were clean-shaven, and he wore a new evening suit with a soft linen shirt and a velvet coat. On his left breast was a decoration, on his marriage finger was a ring set with an emerald surrounded by brilliants. This ring had been given to him by Hella von Rosenthal. He had recently begun to wear it again. His heart was void. The peahens were no longer his; they had flown out into the world.

In the front corner of the box sat Sophie von Sebaltz, at the back stood Wolf; on either side of Martin sat two of his friends talking to him.

"Ah," said Konstanz, the man at his left hand,

" have courage, dearest friend. The most beautiful work in the world will stir their hearts to hell depths and heaven heights."

Hirchner sat at Schüler's right side with one hand on his shoulder and the other grasping his right hand so that the ring on the marriage finger cut his palm. He secretly feared that " The Peahens " was above the heads of the general public, but he said in rolling accents:

" It is going to be wonderful, glorious, colossal, an ever-to-be-remembered, altogether magnificent success. Ah, look at the faces turning their eyes upon you! You are recognized. Permit us to support you, dear friend, you must stand."

Cheers filled the Opera House. Like a child Schüler did as he was bidden. He stood erect in the box and bowed, supported by his friends, who only half rose in order to give him the supremacy in height. Everybody shouted and clapped. He had been a great favourite in the old days. Sophie clapped also. Wolf let his nature out in one loud shout.

The orchestra began the overture. With the first notes the group in the box melted away to the corners. Countess von Ardstein bustled in and sat down. Sophie sat in the front corner of the box in a flame-coloured dress of gauze. She looked as lovely as she had ever done. She leant very much on the front of the box and let her right arm lie over the edge. She gazed straight down at the dark people below her: with her fingers

she played with her pearl. She felt very lonely. She wished Martin would put out his hand to her or touch her. There she sat reclined in a beautiful pose staring down into the abyss. She had not the slightest idea that anything was being performed.

Wolf stood at the back of the box, his attention riveted. It seemed to him as he gave himself to the music that the light upon the stage came out of Martin's mind like a searchlight, and, widening out over a piece of heaven, concentrated itself again in his own brain. He thought that if Martin had not been there the whole spectacle would vanish, and the sounds of music drop to silence. Hirchner sat beside him with his legs crossed, looking like a man of the world, but his mind was soaring to the highest heights, and he felt that he had been born only to hear the wonder of that night. The Countess kept her eyes fixed on the back of Martin's head. Konstanz saw his soul swim like a golden carp in the fish ponds of Elysium.

Count von Schüler himself stared at the stage, his whole nerves supporting the whole of the performance. Every slight technical mistake broke something in him. During its progress he suffered everything that he had ever suffered during his labours on it, and went again through every ecstasy, through every disappointment; as the acts followed one another he held his heart still for the climax. His beautiful and perfect work ravished his soul out of him; he never had heard or seen anything to be compared with it; it exceeded his

dreams ; all the loveliness of his whole life was there. Once he smiled at his young Wagnerian dreams and saw a bridge, slender as a rainbow, stand over his life from his twentieth year till now. He went back seven years to the top of the bridge and looked down at Leipsic and Berlin and the Black Forest. The millions of episodes of his life lay below him. He was thousands of hours above them in the air. " Here am I," he thought, " and I have safely crossed by this bridge ; how slender and how beautiful and how white. I have made it and it is my own support. I suppose it was necessary for my body to go by land ; only at the end can we cross by the complete bridge back to the beginning." He looked down the far side towards Heidelberg. Under the far end of the bridge flowed the Neckar. He saw the pavilion upon the castle hill shining with electric lights. For some time he stood up there upon the top of the bridge in contemplation of the beauty of the universe ; he understood all creation and the smallest actions of living things. Suddenly he found himself sitting in a box at the Opera House of Berlin. It was the last act. He was awaiting the sensation of the million falls that he had so often had. Unfortunately the actors were not quite up to their task. They failed to produce the true, the absolute sensation. The audience also did not appreciate the climax. The orchestra alone carried themselves away by their own playing. Hirchner moved, his heart torn out of his body by the marvellous

perfection of the music; Wolf wept, amazed at the incomprehensible before him; Sophie dreamed, still leaning in her corner, of things she did not know.

As the last chord sounded, Countess von Ardstein touched Hirchner and Konstanz. They looked at Martin, electrified at her contact. Martin had risen and was leaning forward with his hands upon the edge of the box; he seemed to be about to speak, but sank again heavily into his chair. Hirchner half sprang to his feet. The Countess detained him. Sophie was staring blankly at Martin. She alone could see his face. Absolute silence fell over the theatre. Sophie shrank back into the curtains and raised her hands in an action of self-protection. In a few seconds the audience began to go quickly out of the theatre and everybody knew that Martin Schüler was dead.

His body was taken home to the house of the Ardsteins and laid upon a bed. He lay in the centre of a scene that he would have appreciated. The rest of Wolf's life crouched in a black stricken form beside the bed. Sophie, to whom nothing was comprehensible, wept by him, supported in the arms of Hirchner. Konstanz and the Count von Ardstein stood in the background with the Countess, who was playing with her lorgnon. In the silence and the pale light of the breaking day all those people felt that they had now for ever finished with life and that with the first gleam of the rising sun they would all vanish away.

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